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MISCELLANIES;

OR,

LITERARY

RECREATIONS.

By I. D'ISRAELI.

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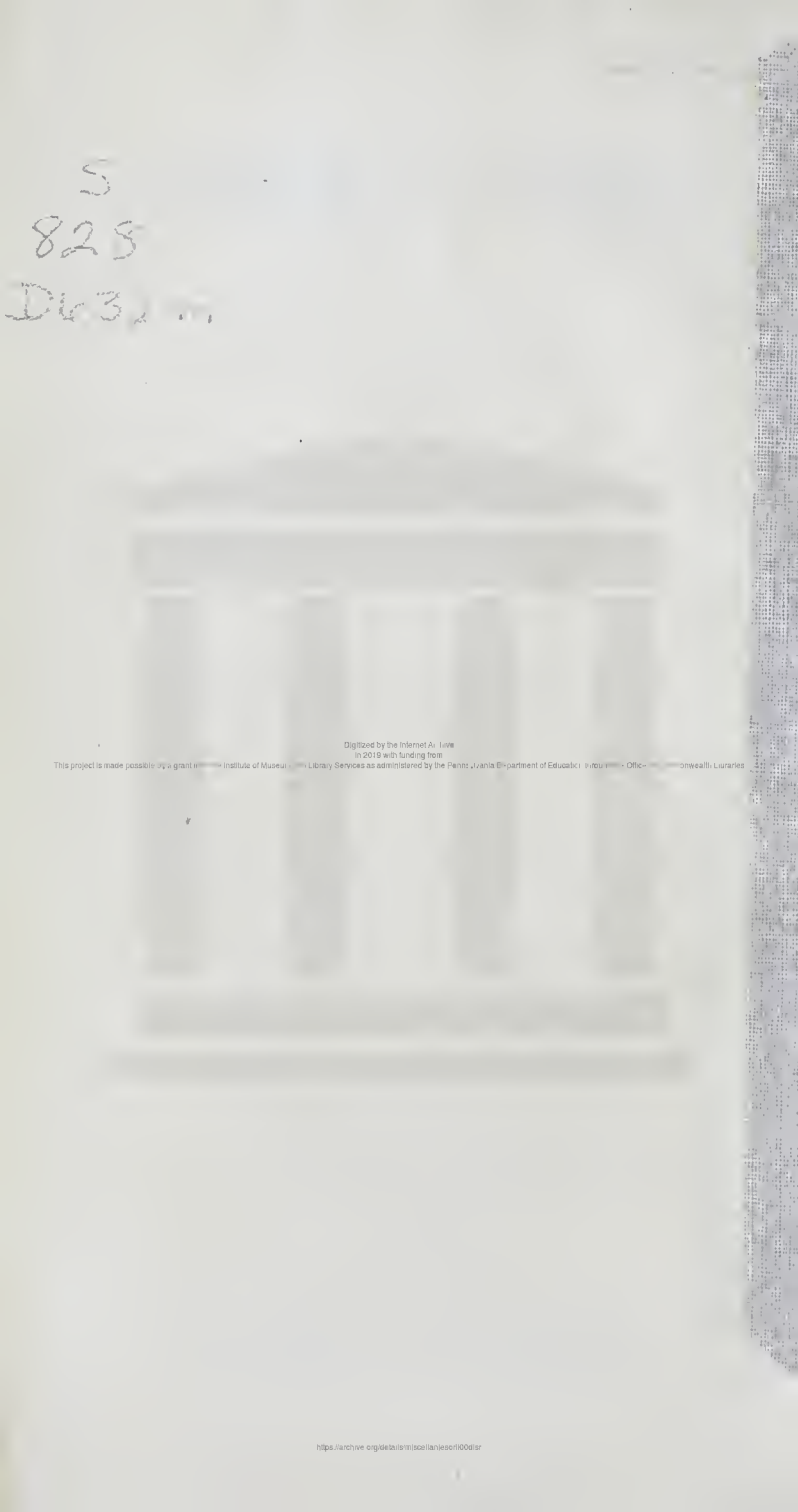

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TO

HUGH DOWNMAN, M. D. of EXETER,

THIS

VOLUME of MISCELLANIES

IS INSCRIBED

AS A MEMORIAL OF THE AUTHOR'S ESTEEM

FOR

HIS VIRTUES AND HIS TALENTS.

EXETER, 22*d February*, 1796.

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PREFACE.

OF literary performances, a work like the preſent, might be permitted to appear, without the accuſtomed ornament of a Preface; for what are MISCELLANIES, but a kind of Prefaces? They are rather introductions to ſubjects, than ſubjects themſelves; and like Prefaces, are frequently more pleaſing, than the completer works.

In theſe pages I have arranged ſome of the materials of my obſervation, and have blown into a little flame, ſome ſparks of learning.

To adorn criticiſm with imagery, and to eſtabliſh obſervation by anecdote, has, if I err not, a claim on the public indulgence; for it cannot be ſaid that we have many books of this race. Of all Europe, we have excelled in the miſcellaneous mode of writing; but our's has been generally addreſſed to the imagination, and not much to literary curioſity. A manner of compoſition very ſuperior to that which this volume exhibits; ſince the knowledge which regulates the paſſions of the heart, is more valuable than that which furniſhes the ideas of the head; for virtue is permanent, but opinion is unſtable. Writings which awaken our ſenſibility by fiction, muſt pleaſe more generally than books which only inſtruct our judgment by truths; for I have obſerved, that

moſt

moſt are more wearied by idleneſs, than diſturbed by ignorance.

In this book are ſentiments which, ancient or new, judicious or erroneous, may probably encounter controverters. The apparent errors of an author, ſometimes proceed from the ambiguity, or imperfect expreſſion of his conceptions; but ſometimes from the prejudices and inabilities of his critics. Of literary opinions I ſhall not be unreaſonably tenacious; for whatever ſome authors may imagine, the concerns of mere literature, are not very material in the ſyſtem of human life. They are objects, however, more innocent to diſcuſs, than topics more prevalent. The oppoſite opinions of periodical critics have afforded me ſome amuſement, ſome inſtruction, and ſome indignation, and in want of a ſubject

for this Preface, that of their character may not be unintereſting to the lover of literature.

When we abound with periodical critics, we muſt neceſſarily abound with erroneous criticiſm. Some have their old prejudices, ſome their new follies, and ſome their incurable imbecillity; for impotence is radical. Rarely we find a critic whoſe extenſive powers are familiar with what has been done, and what is doing; whoſe ſagacity not only diſcovers the real abilities of an author, but, with a preſcient diſcernment, can judge to what his future powers may be competent; and by his vigour of conception, and delicacy of taſte, exhibit beauties kindred to the fine original he reviews.

Literary journals conducted by an intelligent editor, abound with the pleaſures

pleaſures and the utilities of letters; but certainly with ſuch an editor every Review is not provided. The perſonal irritation of men of genius has depreciated theſe records of literature; and ſuch errors have been ſtrangely propagated, with the additional extravagancies of perſons, not converſant with literary affairs. Some yet believe a Review to be compoſed by a junto, who, in black coats, and with grave faces, aſſemble around "a board of green cloth." The interior of a Review has nothing of it's apparent complexity; the entire machine is revolved by a ſolitary hand, ſometimes with experienced dexterity, and ſometimes with caſual imbecillity.

It is certain, that the pleaſure of running over fifty books in an hour, is a voluptuous indulgence for every literary

literary idler; and authors feel a great curioſity in taking in at a glance, what is performing by their contemporaries. To ſtudents remote from the metropolis, it is only by the intermediate aid of theſe periodical pages, that they can form an acquaintance with the public taſte. A review is a literary arena, where young writers learn to wreſtle with their rivals.

When ſuch is the intereſt and the ſagacity of a conductor, that ſome of the literary characters of the age are invited to take a ſhare in theſe works, they receive an additional importance, and form a valuable acceſſion to the treaſuries of literature. At a future day they are conſulted to detect the vulnerable parts of our literary heroes; to obtain accounts of obſcure publications often

often neceſſary in the hiſtory of letters; and to reflect on the manner in which the literary world received certain works, diſtinguiſhed at their firſt appearance, by the novelties of their ſyſtem.

It is obſervable, that men, whoſe deciſions are regarded on the works of the firſt writers, are themſelves unknown, and voluntarily preclude all reputation by their ſtudied ſecreſy. By ſome no additional reputation is wanted. Two intereſts ſtimulate the writers of reviews; the pleaſure of examining new publications; or the petty ſtipend of literary pay, too often neceſſary for ſome men of genius. I am of opinion, that this obſcurity is favourable to their powers. To whatever is known more by it's effects, than by it's cauſe, the imagination is friendly.

If

If great names appeared to the articles of a Review, the public and the author would abrogate their deciſions; we ſhould ſometimes protect the meaneſt, that we might have the pleaſure of humbling the greateſt. It is not, therefore, with the deities of literature, as with thoſe of religion; to attract and fix the vulgar, it was neceſſary to inflame them with viſible Gods; but here their inviſibility is their omnipotence.

On the neceſſity of anonymous criticiſm, a more ſerious obſervation occurs. If this ſecreſy were unregarded, it would be often fatal to the critic. Motley, indeed, is that vaſt collection of men, who enliſt under the banners of literature, and our Republic of Letters is diſgraced with numerous Sans-culottes. While the deciſions of criticiſm are received with

with reſignation, by the modeſt, the deſperate would accompany them with an "Appendix" on the weak frame of a Reviewer. I knew a wild Highlander, juſt eſcaped from the Orkneys, who threatened extermination to his Reviewers, and watched through the cold moonſhine of December, at the door of his critic, who was then fortunately retained in his apartment by the gout; while another, with leſs inhumanity, commenced a ſuit at law, for having been taxed with plagiariſms and ſcotticiſms.

To young writers, and to general readers, who are always young in literature, a Reviewer may offer an important inſtruction, when at the appearance of a work of magnitude, he commences his article with condenſing the chief rules of compoſi-

tion,

tion, relating to the work he examines, and with characters of the preceding writers. Of this happy mode of Reviewing, many beautiful ſpecimens are exhibited in the Monthly Review. As models, I recollect two recent inſtances; the Reviews of Murphy's Tacitus, and Beresford's Virgil.

The defects of periodical criticiſm are more numerous, than can be reaſonably allowed, to men of learning and candour; it is evident, indeed, that our critics have ſometimes neither learning nor candour. A friend, an adverſary, or the author himſelf, are all bad critics. It is a cruel proceſs of critical alchemy, when a Reviewer plays his game on the principles of what is technically termed at whiſt, a ſee-ſaw. Two ſuits are made to anſwer each other;

and

and praiſe and cenſure are ſo ſkilfully contraſted, that one would defeat the other, did not the cenſure of an author ever cauſe a ſtronger ſenſation than all his praiſe. Thus to ſcatter eulogiums, is like the ancient prieſt, who wreathed with flowers and gilded, the horns of the victim he conducted to bleed on the altar. Sometimes we are informed that an author is lively and ingenious, but not profound and learned. Such inſidious detractions are certain of injuring his literary character. It is neceſſary to tell the public, what an author *is*; endleſs were it to enumerate what he *is not*; it is deſcribing a non-entity. Such literary contraſts are unjuſt; becauſe they imply deficiencies, which are not deficiencies; they are only qualities incompatible with the diſpoſitions of the author.

Sometimes

Sometimes a Reviewer, perceiving his inability to decide on a work, forms an article in the manner of an enigma, with a dark and intricate ingenuity; he decides on nothing, but appears very deciſive; nor is that criticiſm more uſeful, which preſents to a reader an idea of a work, in the expreſs terms employed by an author in his Preface; it is well known, than an author ever indulges his paſſion for the "beau ideal," in his explanation of his work. Every thing there is perfect in theory; and the critic who will accept the profeſſions of authors, will find innumerable perfect works. Laviſhly to cenſure the peculiarities of a writer, is a defect in criticiſm; to delineate his manner, is a duty. Point and antitheſis, ſparkling imagery, and varieties of diction, are not adapted

to

to every taſte; but to a critic who ſhould reprobate them, I would ſay, does any man of taſte cenſure Voltaire and Johnſon? Would you deſpoil an author of his manner? You would then make Voltaire, not Voltaire, and Johnſon, not Johnſon. Egregious critic! to make him pleaſe the world, you would have him reſemble *yourſelf!*—The world and you have not agreed on the ſame model. Some critics incapable of forming opinions of their own, ſeiſe any prevalent one; their heads are continually changing principles, like thoſe towns in Flanders, which are as often under the government of the Republicans, as the Imperialiſts. In echoing the public voice there is no individual merit. Does ſuch a criticiſm deſerve publication? No! it is a criticiſm *already publiſhed.* An

intelligent Reviewer anticipates the public opinion.

To form a Review into an inſtrument of torture, ſportively to lacerate the ſenſibilities of men of genius, was the artifice of the Frerons, and the Des Fontaines; when their Journals lay on the ſhelf, they augmented their malignancy in the enſuing month, and when the writers were fairly lodged in the Baſtile, the ſale was conſiderable. Kenrick wrote with a poiſoned and remorſeleſs pen. This violation of the morality of criticiſm, extinguiſhes the genius of the modeſt ſtudent. Such critics reſemble the Remora, that petty fiſh, which the ancients imagined could impede a ſhip under full ſail.

A Review, conducted with ſkill, ſhould preſent the literary phyſiognomy

nomy of the century. In an age of refinement, the public taſte is in a ſtate of vacillation; and no mean art, or limited knowledge, can catch, with faithful reſemblance, "the Cynthia of the minute." We abound with literary faſhions, and have no other mode of recording and perpetuating our prevalent taſtes, but in theſe uſeful archives of literature. It is neceſſary that the ſtate of Engliſh literature, of former, as well as of the preſent times, be familiar to a Reviewer, for incidental obſervations, and appropriate anecdotes, variegate with flowers the thorns of criticiſm, and, not merely delightful, exhibit an intelligent and connective ſeries. Above all, a periodical critic ſhould diveſt himſelf of the rancour of faction; and that Reviewer, is as devoid of taſte, as

of the morals of a critic, who, in the retired groves of Academus, would place a pillory, or erect a gallows.

I propoſed, at the cloſe of this Preface, having been lately honoured by certain calumnies, to repel ſuch inſolent accuſations; but I have conſidered, that this might give them, and myſelf, an importance to which neither is entitled. It is one of the inconveniencies attached to literature, that, in contending times like the preſent, every ingenuous writer muſt inevitably offend the two vaſt diviſions, in which we may now claſs the European public. As every thing in this world revolves in a circle, and our follies, and our errors, are dull repetitions of former follies, and former errors; this, alſo, was a complaint of that amiable literary

rary character, Eraſmus, who, in his ſtormy age of revolutions, tells us, that works of mere literature, were always confounded by the one party, as aids to Luther, or by the other, as ſervilities to the Court of Rome. A writer on literary topics, is now placed on a ſharp precipice between politics and religion; and the public reward of all his anxieties, and all his toils, conſiſts in the mutual denounciations of two diſhoneſt factions. Literary inveſtigation is allied neither to politics nor religion; it is a ſcience conſecrated to the few; abſtracted from all the factions on earth; and independent of popular diſcontents, and popular deluſions. Men of letters, of all profeſſions, are alone privileged to repeat the verſes of a philoſophic poet,

——————— Nous y ſommes
CONTEMPORAINS de tous les hommes,
Et CITOYENS de tous les lieux.*

De la Motte.

* Yet let it not be conſidered, that I can regard, with apathy, the vaſt intereſts, agitated with ſuch levity, among the people, who are only formed to *obey* the laws, but not to *make* them. On this ſubject I ſhall ſhew in what manner one of the wiſeſt ancients thought. When Plato was conſulted, reſpecting the form of government to be choſen for the Syracuſans (whether to revive the tyranny, or eſtabliſh a popular government) his reply was more admirably ſagacious, and more enlightened by truth, than thoſe idle, yet pernicious and deluding theories, which ſome of our modern quartos exhibit. He at leaſt committed no ſyſtematical plagiariſms, on Rouſſeau, Mirabeau, and Helvetius. We cannot too often meditate on this Extract from his Letter.

" A State will never be happy, either under a confirmed tyranny, or an exceſſive liberty. We muſt yield obedience to KINGS, who are themſelves ſubjects to the laws; extreme liberty, and extreme ſervitude, are equally perilous, and nearly produce the ſame effects. The people muſt obey God; the LAW is the god of the wiſe, and LICENTIOUSNESS the god of fools." And we muſt now add, the ſanguinary god of aſſaſſinators and proſcribers.

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MISCELLANIES.

Of Miscellanies.

HAD I the genius, I would delineate the character of a Miſcellaniſt; of whom I have formed an idea, perfect, though by ſome it may be deemed erroneous. When Cicero deſcribed the character of an accompliſhed orator, he formed it from a perfect imagination of oratory, which, like the fine ideal of Raphael, exiſted no where but in his own admirable conceptions. Every writer of genius, when he has pourtrayed the requiſites for an artiſt, in his favourite art, in the ſame manner raiſes and adorns them, by excellencies, of which the neceſſity can be felt by few, and the powers at-

tained by none. Critics, of ordinary ſagacity, have therefore often diſturbed the viſion, by cenſuring it's exquiſiteneſs and decreeing it's impoſſibility. To ſuch, we may obſerve, that though we can rarely traverſe an expanſive horizon, who, endowed with a vigorous viſion, delights not to expatiate along it's extremities? and while a ſenſation of delight aggrandiſes the ſoul of ſuch a ſpectator, he will turn contemptuouſly from the pitiful obſervation of him, who with meaner optics, gravely admoniſhes, of impaſſable foreſts, and unnavigable rivers. Perfection though unattainable, muſt ſtill be the frequent object of our contemplation; becauſe every kind of excellence is a portion of perfection, and no portion can be accurately appreciated, if we are incapable of forming ſome idea of the whole.

I give ſome obſervations on Miſcellanies, which, like their ſubject, may perhaps

perhaps require an apology for their unconnected ſtate. The Miſcellaniſts ſatiriſe the Pedants; and the Pedants abuſe the Miſcellaniſts; but little has hitherto been gained by this inglorious conteſt; ſince Pedants will always be read by Pedants, and the Miſcellaniſts by the taſteful, the volatile, and the amiable.

Literary eſſays are claſſed under philological ſtudies; but philology formerly conſiſted rather of the labours of arid grammarians, and conjectural critics, than of that more elegant philoſophy which has been lately introduced into literature, and which by it's graces and inveſtigation, can augment the beauties of original genius, by beauties of it's own.

It has been obſerved that philological purſuits inflate the mind with a great ſwell of vanity, and have carried ſome men of learning to a curious and ridiculous extravagance. Perhaps this

literary orgaſm may ariſe from two cauſes. Philologiſts are apt to form too exalted an opinion of the nature of their ſtudies, while they often make their peculiar taſte, a ſtandard by which they judge of the ſentiments of others. It is not thus with the ſcientific and the moral writer; Science is modeſt and cautious, Morality is humble and reſigned, while Philology alone is arrogant and poſitive. A *fact* in ſcience is found with infinite labour, and may be overturned by a new diſcovery; and an *action* in morality may be ſo mingled with human paſſions, that we heſitate to pronounce it perfect, and analyſe it with tranquillity. But it is not difficult with ſome to perſuade themſelves that Virgil is an immaculate author, and that they are men of exquiſite taſte. The Pedants of the laſt age exerciſed a vanity and ferocity revived by thoſe critics, who have been called Warburtonians. They employed

employed ſimilar language in their deciſions to that of Du Moulin, a great lawyer of thoſe days who always prefixed to his conſultations, this defiance, "I who yield to no perſon, and whom "no perſon can teach any thing."

By one of theſe was Montaigne, the venerable father of modern Miſcellanies, called "a bold ignorant fellow." To thinking readers, this critical ſummary will appear myſterious; for Montaigne had imbibed the ſpirit of all the moral writers of antiquity; and although he has made a capricious complaint of a defective memory, we cannot but wiſh the complaint had been more real; for we diſcover in his works nearly as much compilement, as reflection, and he is one of thoſe authors who ſhould quote rarely, but who deſerves to be often quoted. Montaigne was cenſured by Scaliger, as Addiſon was cenſured by Warburton; becauſe both, like Socrates, per-

ceived and reprobated that mere erudition, which conſiſts of knowing the thoughts of others, and having no thoughts of our own. To weigh ſyllables, and to arrange dates, to adjuſt texts, and to heap annotations, has generally proved the abſence of the higher faculties. But when a more adventurous ſpirit, of this herd, attempted ſome novel diſcovery, often men of taſte beheld, with indignation, the perverſions of their underſtanding; and a Bentley in his Milton, or a Warburton on a Virgil, had either a ſingular imbecillity concealed under the arrogance of the Scholar, or they did not believe what they told the Public; the one in his extraordinary invention of an interpolating editor, and the other in his more extraordinary explanation of the Eleuſinian myſteries. But what was ſtill worſe, the froth of the head became venom, when it reached the heart.

Montaigne

Montaigne has alſo been cenſured for an apparent vanity, in making himſelf the idol of his lucubrations. If he had not done this, he had not performed the promiſe he makes at the commencement of his preface. An engaging tenderneſs prevails in theſe *naive* expreſſions, which ſhall not be injured by a verſion. " Je l'ay voué à " la commodité particuliere de mes Pa- " rens et Amis; à ce que m'ayans perdu " (ce qu'ils ont à faire bientoſt) ils y " puiſſent retrouver quelques traicts de " mes humeurs, et que par ce moyen ils " nourriſſent plus entiere et plus vifue " la conoiſſance qu'ils ont eu de moi.'*

Thoſe authors who appear ſometimes to forget they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favourites. He who writes from the heart, will write to the heart; every one is enabled to decide on his merits,

 and

* From the preface to his Eſſays which did not appear in the earlieſt Editions, and is omitted in Cotton's verſion. It is dated 1580.

and they will not be referred to more learned heads, or a more diſtant period. We are I think little intereſted if an author diſplays ſublimity, but we ſhould be much concerned to know whether he has ſincerity.

Are the periods grand and aſiatic? compreſſed and laconic? neat and attic? I approve an author's induſtry, or I like his taſte; but the artifices of ſtyle, in an age of refinement may be conſidered only as the varniſh which beautifies, but muſt not be miſtaken, as it ſometimes is, for the object beautified. But are his ſentiments fervid? his diction varied? his fancy eaſy? his judgment penetrative? does he ſometimes touch his ſubject with airineſs, and ſometimes ſooth by a graceful amenity? Should not this author ever aſſume a fantaſtic air of novelty, I will truſt to every ſentiment, I will aſſimilate his ſenſations with my own, and I will look into his works,

works, as into my own heart. Why, ſays Boileau, are my verſes read by all? it is only becauſe they ſpeak truths, and that I am convinced of the truths I write. This is his meaning, finely amplified in theſe lines.

Sais tu pourquoi mes vers ſont lus dans les provinces
Sont recherchés du peuple, et reçus ches les princes ?
Cé n'eſt pas que leur ſons agreables, nombreux,
Soient toujours á l'oreille également heureux ;
Qu'en plus d'un lieu le ſens n'y gene la meſure,
Et qu'un mot quelquefois n'y brave la ceſure.
Mais c'eſt qu'en eux le Vrai, du menſonge vainqueur,
Par tout ſe montre aux yeux, et va ſaiſir le Coeur ;
Que le bien et le mal, y ſont priſés au juſte,
Que jamais un Faquin n'y tient un rang auguſte,
Et que mon Coeur, toujours conduiſant mon eſprit,
Ne dit rien aux Lecteurs qu'a ſoi-meme il n'ait dit.

IMITATED.

Say why my verſe the village reader moves
The Town applauds it, and the Court approves ?
Not that it's tones, to harmony ſo dear,
Can always happy charm the attic ear ;
That the free thought not mars the meaſured chain ;
The pauſe oft broken in the fervid ſtrain.
But 'tis that Truth, uplifts the maſk of art,
Lives thro' the page, and inſtant, ſtrikes the heart.

That

That moral good, is valued in the Rhime
That waſtes on idiot Peers, no note ſublime;
And ſtill my heart, the honeſt mind that led
Says nought, but to itſelf what firſt it ſaid.

Why it may be enquired have ſome of our fine writers intereſted more than others, who have not diſplayed inferior talents? becauſe they have raiſed no artificial emotions, but poured forth the vigorous expreſſions of a heart, which ſeemed relieved from an oppreſſion of ſenſibility, as it's ardent ſentiments animated every period. Montaigne therefore preferred thoſe of the ancients, who appear to write under a conviction of what they ſaid; the eloquent Cicero declaims but coldly on liberty, while in the impetuous Brutus may be perceived a man, who is reſolved to purchaſe it with his life. We know little of Plutarch; yet there is a ſpirit of honeſty and perſuaſion in his works, which expreſſes a philoſophical character, that is not alone capable of

of admiring, but of imitating the virtues he records. Why is Addiſon ſtill the firſt of our eſſayiſts? he has ſometimes been excelled in criticiſms more philoſophical, in topics more intereſting, and in diction more coloured. But there is a pathetic charm in the character he has aſſumed, in his periodical Miſcellanies, which is felt with ſuch a gentle force, that we ſcarce advert to it. He has painted forth his little humours, his individual feelings, and eterniſed himſelf to his readers. Johnſon and Hawkeſworth we receive with reſpect, and we diſmiſs with awe; we come from their writings as from public lectures, and from Addiſon's as from private converſations.

Sterne perhaps derives a portion of his celebrity from the ſame influence; he intereſts us in his minuteſt motions, for he tells us all he feels. Richardſon was ſenſible of the power with which theſe minute ſtrokes of deſcription

enter

enter the heart, and which are ſo many faſtenings to which the imagination clings. He ſays "If I give "ſpeeches and converſations I ought "to give them juſtly; for the humours "and characters of perſons cannot be "known, unleſs I repeat *what* they ſay, "and their *manner* of ſaying." I confeſs I am infinitely pleaſed when Sir William Temple acquaints us with the ſize of his orange trees, and with the flavour of his peaches and grapes, confeſſed by Frenchmen to equal thoſe of France; with his having had the honour to naturalize in this country four kinds of grapes, with his liberal diſtribution of them becauſe "he ever thought all "things of this kind the commoner "they are the better." In a word with his paſſionate attachment to his garden, of his deſire to eſcape from great employments, and having paſt five years without going to town, where, by the way, "he had a large houſe

"always

" always ready to receive him." Dryden has interſperſed many of theſe little particulars in his proſaic compoſitions, and I think, that his character and diſpoſitions, may be more correctly acquired by uniting theſe ſcattered notices, than by any biographical account which can now be given of this man of genius.

But we muſt now reject this pleaſing egotiſm, that often relates to us all; this vanity, that has often ſo much ſimplicity; this ſelf-flattery that has often ſo much modeſty. As refinement prevails we ſeek to conceal ourſelves from too familiar an inſpection; ſimplicity of manners paſſes away with ſimplicity of ſtyle. When we write with ſparkling antitheſis, and ſolemn cadences, with elaborate elegancies and ſtudied graces, an author is little deſirous of painting himſelf in domeſtic negligence. Our writings reſemble our faſhions, various in their manner, but

but never ſimple, and our authors, like their fellow-citizens, are vying with each other in pomp and dignity. Hence, the perſonal acquaintance of a modern author, is always to his diſadvantage; he has publiſhed himſelf a ſuperior being; we approach and diſcover the impoſture. The readers of Montaigne, had they met with him, would have felt differently; they would have found a friend complaining like themſelves of his infirmities, and ſmiling with them, at the folly of his complaints.

From this agreeable mode of compoſition, a ſpecies of Miſcellanies may be diſcriminated, which, above all others, becomes precious in the collections of a reader of taſte. To the compoſition of theſe little works, which are often diſcovered in a fugitive ſtate, their authors are prompted by the fine impulſes of genius, derived from the peculiarity of their ſituation, or the enthuſiaſm

enthuſiaſm of their prevailing paſſion. Dictated by the heart, or poliſhed with the fondneſs of delight, theſe productions are impreſſed by the ſeductive eloquence of genius, or attach us by the ſenſibility of taſte. The object thus ſelected, is no taſk, impoſed on the mind of the writer, for the mere ambition of literature; but is generally a voluntary effuſion, warm with all the ſenſations of a pathetic writer. In a word they are the compoſitions of genius, on a ſubject in which it is moſt deeply intereſted; which it revolves on all it's ſides, which it paints in all it's tints, and which it finiſhes with the ſame ardour it began. Among ſuch works may be placed the exiled Bolingbroke's "Reflections upon Ex-"ile," The retired Petrarch and Zimmerman's Eſſays on "Solitude." The impriſoned Boethius's "Conſolations "of Philoſophy." The oppreſſed Pierius Valerianus's Catalogue of "Lite-

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" rary Calamities." The deformed Hay's Eſſay on " Deformity." The projecting De Foe's " Eſſays on Pro- " jects." And the liberal Shenſtone's Poem on " Economy."*

We may reſpect the profound genius of voluminous writers; they are a kind of painters who occupy great room, and fill up, as a ſatiriſt expreſſes it, " an acre of canvaſs." But we muſt prefer thoſe delicate pieces which the Graces lay on the altar of taſte. A groupe of Cupids, a Venus emerging from the waves, a Pſyche or an Aglaia, embelliſh the cabinet of the man of taſte, who connects theſe little pieces by wreaths of roſes. A Miſcellaniſt ſhould imitate two painters; the modern Albano, celebrated for painting the ſmalleſt and the moſt beautiful figures;

* Such writers not only inveſtigate their ſubject with unwearied vigilance, but deſcribing their own ſenſations without any ſemblance of egotiſm, impart obſervations which either eſcape others, or are given with inferior force, by thoſe who compoſe not under the ſame energetic impulſe.

figures; and the ancient Parrhaſius, who was ever in ſuch good humour with himſelf as to ſing at his labours, which happy circumſtance, it is ſuppoſed, imparted ſo much gaiety to his compoſitions.

But however exquiſitely theſe little pieces may be formed, there is a race of ſtudents who fail not to contemn elegance as frivolity, and inſtructive knowledge as ſuperficial erudition. The ponderous ſcholars have facetiouſly expreſſed their contempt by calling the agreeable writers "empty "bottles." Uſbek, the Perſian of Monteſquieu, is one of the profoundeſt philoſophers; his letters are however but conciſe pages. Rochefoucault and La Bruyere are not ſuperficial obſervers of human nature, although they have only written ſentences. Of Tacitus it has been finely remarked by Monteſquieu, that "he "abridged every thing becauſe he ſaw

"every thing," and I have ever admired the character of Timanthes, the painter, of whom it is recorded that he expreſſed more than he painted by an inſtructive and comprehenſive reſervedneſs.

It ſhould indeed be the characteriſtic of good Miſcellanies, to be multifarious and conciſe. Montaigne approves of Plutarch and Seneca, becauſe their looſe papers were ſuited to his diſpoſitions, and where knowledge is acquired without a tedious ſtudy. It is, ſays he, no great attempt to take one in hand, and I give over at pleaſure, for they have no ſequel or connection. There are writers, as well as readers, who only conſult books for their amuſement; and they alike are ſenſible, that four things are written and read with greater pleaſure, than one, though that one ſhould be ſhorter than the four. If Literature is only with ſome a mere amuſement, I think

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it will not diminiſh it's importance in the affairs of human life; and Dryden confeſſes, though he is pleaſed to add to his ſhame, that he never read any thing but for his pleaſure; he might have added, however, that the pleaſures of Literature are the moſt inſtructive pleaſures.

Montaigne's works have been called by a Cardinal "the Breviary of Idlers." It is therefore the book of Man; for all Men are Idlers; we have hours which we paſs with lamentation, and which we know are always returning. At thoſe moments Miſcellaniſts are conformable to all our humours, and often are ſo congruous to our mental tone, that they illuminate in many a critical moment. We dart along their airy and conciſe page, and their lively anecdote, or their profound obſervation are ſo many interſtitial pleaſures in our liſtleſs hours.

We find, in theſe literary miniatures qualities incompatible with more voluminous performances. Sometimes a bolder, and ſometimes a firmer touch; for they are allowed but a few ſtrokes; and ſhould not always trace an elegant phraſe, but grave a forcible ſentiment. They are permitted every kind of ornament, for how can the diminutive pleaſe unleſs it charms by it's finiſhed decorations, it's elaborate niceties, and it's exquiſite poliſh? A conciſe work preſerves a common ſubject from inſipidity, and an uncommon one from error. An eſſayiſt expreſſes himſelf with a more real enthuſiaſm, than the writer of a volume; for I have obſerved that the moſt fervid genius is apt to cool in a quarto. Race horſes appear only to diſplay their agile rapidity in the courſe, while on the road, they ſoon become ſpiritleſs and tame.

The ancients were great admirers of Miſcellanies; and this with ſome profound

found ſtudents who affect to contemn theſe light and beautiful compoſitions, might be a ſolid argument to evince their bad taſte. Aulus Gellius has preſerved a copious liſt of titles of ſuch works. Theſe titles are ſo numerous and include ſuch gay and pleaſing deſcriptions, that we may infer by their number that they were greatly admired by the public, and by their titles that they prove the great delight their authors experienced in their compoſition. Among the titles are a baſket of flowers; an embroidered mantle; and a variegated meadow.

The Troubadours, Conteurs, and Jongleurs practiſed what is yet called in the ſouthern parts of France, *Le guay Saber*, or the gay ſcience. I conſider theſe as the Miſcellaniſts of their day; they had their grave moralities, their tragical hiſtories, and their ſportive tales; their verſe and their proſe. The village was in motion at their ap-

proach; the caſtle was opened to the ambulatory poets, and the feudal hypochondriac liſtened to their ſolemn inſtruction and their airy fancy. I would call miſcellaneous compoſition Le guay Saber, and I would have every miſcellaneous writer as ſolemn and as gay, as various and as pleaſing as theſe lively artiſts of verſatility.

Nature herſelf is moſt delightful in her miſcellaneous ſcenes. When I hold a volume of Miſcellanies, and run over with avidity the titles of it's contents, my mind is enchanted, as if it were placed among the landſcapes of Valais, which Rouſſeau has deſcribed with ſuch pictureſque beauty. I fancy myſelf ſeated in a cottage amid thoſe mountains, thoſe vallies, thoſe rocks, encircled by the enchantments of optical illuſion. I look, and behold at once the united ſeaſons. "All cli-
"mates in one place, all ſeaſons in
"one inſtant." I gaze at once on a hundred

hundred rainbows, and trace the romantic figures of the ſhifting clouds. I ſeem to be in a temple dedicated to the ſervice of the Goddeſs VARIETY.

Of Professors of Art.

It has been often ſaid that a Poet alone ſhould decide on a Poem, and a Painter on a Picture; but this muſt not be accepted as an incontrovertible maxim. It may be obſerved with great truth, that the Profeſſors of an Art, are frequently the moſt incompetent judges of a new performance; and that the truth of criticiſm exiſts no where, but among thoſe Men of Taſte, who without aſpiring to the dangerous glory of being Artiſts, have devoted themſelves to a liberal and comprehenſive affection for Art.

Many are the prejudices which vitiate the deciſion of an Artiſt. The fever of envy will diſorder the fineſt viſion, and the chillneſs of perſonal diſlike will freeze the faculties into a fatal

fatal torpor. There are local, and there are national prejudices; but alluding to none of theſe obvious cauſes, we will conſider an excelling Artiſt, as an honeſt man, and that he comes to the examination of a new production, with that candour which pardons human imperfections, and with that diſpoſition to be pleaſed, without which no man can receive pleaſure; and with theſe favourable propenſities his deciſion may be unjuſt.

This defect in the criticiſms of Artiſts, has not eſcaped the animadverſion of reflecting minds; but is ſtill ſuſceptible of inveſtigation, and forms an important detection in the critical Art. We encounter in the hiſtory of literature and taſte, perplexities which embarraſs, but which examined will diſappear. Artiſts are often arraigned for envy or vanity, when innocent of the paſſions; and Men of Taſte often vacillate in their own juſt notions, among

among the oppoſing ſentiments of great Artiſts.

Every ſuperior Artiſt addicts himſelf to ſome peculiar Manner;* long loved, long purſued, and at length obtained, this enamoured object of his paſſion, excludes by it's conſtancy every deviation from the eſtabliſhed excellence; to diſſimilar beauty, he often becomes inſenſible, and he forms his comparative merit, on any performance, from it's alliance, or it's foreignneſs, to his favourite manner. Without recurring to the degrading paſſions, we may thus account for the very oppoſite and erroneous opinions of great Artiſts, on their different labours. It is not probable that Milton envied the genius of Dryden, when he contemptuouſly called him a Rhimer; but it is more evident that Milton's ideas of poetry were not congenial to the manner of Dryden

* Some parts of this paragraph have been inſerted in an Eſſay on the Literary Character, p. 116.

Dryden. I ſhall place here ſome inſtances which I have remarked. The witty Cowley deſpiſed the natural Chaucer; the claſſical Boileau the rough ſublimity of Crebillon; the forcible Corneille the tender Racine; the refined Marivaux the familiar Moliere; the artificial Gray the ſimple Shenſtone; and the plain and unadorned Montaigne the rich and eloquent Cicero. Each enſlaved to his peculiar manner, was incapable of viewing the diverſifications of beauty, but attached himſelf to a partial and endeared portion.

Whenever an uncommon ſpecies of compoſition appears, which diſplays a new mode of excellence, and places a new model in the ſchool of taſte, the ſloweſt and the laſt, to chaunt their peans to that Artiſt, will be Artiſts themſelves. To envy this cannot always be attributed, but will be generally derived from a want of the proper

per taſte for that manner, which taſte can only be gradually formed. One reaſon, perhaps, why Artiſts ſometimes are inimical to a foreign excellence may be attributed to what the French denominate la jalouſie de metier, the jealouſy of trade; becauſe every novel manner is a kind of hoſtility againſt thoſe already eſtabliſhed. But ſome Artiſts are not always influenced by this prejudice, and yet are equally inimical to the new production.

Of our own times, we may refer to two poets, who it cannot be denied, have created an original manner, and at their firſt appearance in public, appear to have met a ſimilar fate among Artiſts. When Gray's Odes were publiſhed, they delighted two men of poetical taſte,* while they were ridiculed by two men of poetical genius.† At a ſtill later period, Churchill animadverted

* Warburton and Garrick. † Colman and Lloyd.

madverted with ſeverity on the poetry of Gray; and Goldſmith and Johnſon were as inimical to that manner as Churchill himſelf, though by no means admirers of the genius of Churchill. That manner has now become fixed, and is juſtly appreciated by men of taſte. Far from applauding the ſubjects of Peter Pindar, we muſt admire a copiouſneſs of imagery, and a facility of wit, which variegate his early productions with a conſtant variety. At their firſt appearance the critics received them with a ſtoical apathy. The perſonality of ſatire alone enabled them to eſcape the menaced oblivion. The manner once eſtabliſhed, the taſte became formed; and critics now give copious panegyrics of performances, which formerly were placed in the obſcureſt parts of the records of literature. In neither of theſe inſtances can the critics be juſtly cenſured; but it may confirm the judicious obſervation

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of Johnſon, that after all the refinements of criticiſm, the final deciſion muſt be left to common readers unperverted by literary prejudices.

The ſame error frequently induces an Artiſt, when he contraſts his labours with another, to conſider himſelf as the ſuperior, and of courſe to be ſtigmatized with the moſt unreaſonable vanity. I ſhall exemplify the obſervation by the character of Goldſmith; and it may then appear that that pleaſing writer might have contraſted his powers with thoſe of Johnſon, and without any perverſion of intellect, or inflation of vanity, might according to his own ideas have conſidered himſelf, as not inferior to his more celebrated and learned rival.

Goldſmith might have preferred the felicity of his own genius, which like a native ſtream flowed from a natural ſource to the elaborate powers of Johnſon, which in ſome reſpect may

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be compared to thoſe artificial waters which throw their ſparkling currents in the air, to fall into marble baſons. He might have conſidered that he had embelliſhed philoſophy with poetical elegance, and have preferred the paintings of his deſcriptions, to the terſe verſification and the pointed ſentences of Johnſon. He might have been more pleaſed with the faithful repreſentations of Engliſh manners in his Vicar of Wakefield, than with the borrowed grandeur, and the exotic fancy of the oriental Raſſelas. He might have believed, what many excellent critics have believed, that in this age comedy requires more genius than tragedy, and with his audience he might have infinitely more eſteemed his own original humour, than Johnſon's turgid declamation. He might have thought that with inferior literature he diſplayed ſuperior genius, and with leſs profundity, more

gaiety

gaiety. He might have conſidered that the facility and vivacity of his pleaſing compoſitions were preferable to that Art, that habitual pomp, and that oſtentatious eloquence which prevail in the operoſe labours of Johnſon. No one might be more ſenſible than himſelf, that he, according to the happy expreſſion of Johnſon (when his rival was in the grave) " tetigit et " ornavit" Goldſmith therefore without any ſingular vanity, might have concluded from his own reaſonings, that he was not an inferior writer to Johnſon; all this not having been conſidered, he has come down to poſterity as the vaineſt and the moſt jealous of writers; he whoſe diſpoſitions were the moſt inoffenſive, whoſe benevolence was the moſt extenſive, and whoſe amiableneſs of heart, has been concealed by it's artleſſneſs, and paſſed over in the ſarcaſms and ſneers of a more eloquent rival, and his ſubmiſ-

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ſive partizans. This character of Goldſmith may however explain that ſpecies of critical compariſon which one great writer makes of his manner, with that of a rival.

We can hardly cenſure Artiſts for this attachment to their favourite excellence. Who, but an Artiſt, can value the ceaſeleſs inquietudes of arduous perfection; can trace the remote poſſibilities combined in a cloſe union; the happy arrangement and the novel variation? he not only is affected by the performance like the man of taſte, but is influenced by a peculiar ſenſation, for while he contemplates the apparent beauties, he often traces in his own mind thoſe inviſible corrections, by which the final beauty was accompliſhed; it is the practical hand alone that is verſed in, and the eye of genius alone that can diſcriminate many daring felicities, many concealments of art, and many

difficulties overcome. Hence, it is obſerved, that Artiſts do not always prefer thoſe effects which influence an unprejudiced, and uncorrupted taſte; but rather thoſe refinements which form the ſecret exultation of Art; and the minuter excellencies which conſiſt in the mechanical (as a critic of taſte terms it) are often preferred to thoſe more elevated ones which ariſe from the ideal. It is this indulgence for the refinements, which at length terminate in corrupting Art.

But a partiality for ſelecting one branch of Art in preference to another, is perhaps the only aſcent to it's ſummit. We muſt not therefore calumniate Artiſts, if they neglect the various ſchools of beauty. It is not difficult for a man of taſte whoſe hand repoſes, while his head ever thinks; whoſe creative powers are quieſcent, but whoſe perceptive faculties are habitually invigorated; and who in the tranquillity

tranquillity of his cabinet, has only to gaze at pictures, but not to blend colours, and to meditate on poems, but not to compoſe verſes; it is not difficult for this elegant idler to form the moſt various views of beauty in Art; to trace with the ſame lively gratification it's diverſities, and to feel no diſpleaſure from the moſt incongruous manners. Such an one, may be ſuppoſed to hover with extaſy round the ideal of a Raphael, and a Pope, or to mix with the groteſque caricatures of a Hogarth or a Butler. This verſatility of taſte is generally denied to the man of genius; and while men of taſte, are often unanimous in their opinions, we ſhall frequently obſerve, that the greateſt Artiſts give the moſt diſcordant deciſions. Johnſon ſaid that his notions on MSS. proved generally erroneous; and this circumſtance has happened to many eminent writers.

It would therefore ſeem that the moſt unfit perſon to decide on a performance is an Artiſt himſelf; and that the genuine merits of a work are candidly adjuſted and correctly appreciated by men of taſte, and rarely by men of genius.

On Style.

THE Hiſtory of Engliſh Style ſince it's firſt elegance may, perhaps, be traced in the following conciſe manner.

When the national literature has attained to a certain point, there ariſes a ſimple elegance of Style, which in it's progreſs diſplays richer ornaments, and often becomes refined to a vicious exceſs. It may be traced through four ſchools.

The firſt writers who attempt elegance, and poliſh the aſperities of a language, excel in a natural ſweetneſs and amiable ſimplicity. But the Style is not yet caſtigated, for it ſtill retains many colloquial terms and many negligent expreſſions, which either were not ſuch in their day, or their ear, not being yet accuſtomed to a continued

elegance, received no pain from familiar and unſtudied expreſſions. In time theſe defects become ſenſible; yet as theſe writers are placed among the firſt claſſics of their nation, they are regarded with veneration, and often pointed out as the model for young writers. Among ſuch authors we may place Tillotſon, Swift, and Addiſon.

The ſecond ſchool introduces a more diffuſe and verboſe manner; theſe writers ſolicit the ear by a numerous proſe, and expand their ideas on a glittering ſurface. As elegance can only be obtained by diffuſion, it's concomitant is feebleneſs, and an elegant writer enervates his ſentiments. Beauty is inconſiſtent with Force. Elevated emotions theſe writers rarely awaken, but a graceful manner in compoſition is their peculiar charm. Genius may be ſuppoſed at this period, to be ſomewhat impaired by the excurſions of their predeceſſors, and they attempt

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to ſupply by the charms of amenity, and a copious diffuſion of beautiful expreſſion, the demand for novelty, as well as that taſte for elegance of diction which the public now poſſeſs. Among theſe pleaſing writers may be ranked Sir William Temple, though prior to Addiſon, Uſher, Melmoth, &c.

Satiated with the nerveleſs beauty and the protracted period, a third ſchool appears, the votaries of artificial embelliſhment and elaborated diction. At once, magiſterially pompous, and familiarly pointed; conciſe and ſwelling; ſparkling and ſolid; maſſy and light. Sometimes they condenſe ideas, by throwing into one vaſt thought, ſeveral intermediate ones; ſometimes their rotundity of period is ſo arranged that the mind, with the ear, ſeems to riſe on a regular aſcent. The glare of art betrays itſelf; while ſometimes the thoughts are more ſubtile than ſubſtantial, more airy than penetrating;

the expreſſions new, and the ideas old. This ſchool abounds with manneriſts; ſuch are Johnſon, Hawkeſworth, Robertſon, and Gibbon.

When this taſte for ornamented proſe prevails, a fourth ſchool ariſes, compoſed of inferior writers. As it is leſs difficult to collect words, than to create ideas, this race becomes verſed in all the myſteries of diction; trivial thoughts are ridiculouſly inveſted by magnificent expreſſions, and they conſider that blending the moſt glaring colours, without harmony or deſign, is an evidence of higher art. They colour like the diſtracted painter in Bedlam, who delighted in landſcapes of golden earths, and vermilion ſkies. They tell us that their colours are vivid, and we reply that their figures are chimeras. Theſe fantaſtic novelties flouriſh in the warmth of a faſhionable circle, but once placed in the open air, they are killed by the popular gale.

Writers

Writers of this claſs are not to be mentioned, as they are all dead authors who are yet living.

We may here obſerve that every period of literature has it's peculiar Style, derived from ſome author of reputation; and the hiſtory of a language as an object of taſte, might be traced through a collection of ample quotations, from the moſt celebrated authors of each period. We ſhould as rarely find an original Style, as an original Genius; and we ſhould be enabled to perceive the almoſt inſenſible variations which at length produce an original Style.

We muſt advert to the opinions of the public, during this progreſs of Style. Thoſe who have long been attached to the firſt ſchool of natural elegance, with all it's imperfections, revolt from the oſtentatious opulence of the third; and are more inclined to favour the ſecond. The third ſchool

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is however the moſt popular, for the public has greater refinement, than in the preceding periods.

Some diſtinguiſh between taſte and refinement; this diſtinction is not very obvious. Refinement is only a ſuperior taſte, according to thoſe, who are fond of an embelliſhed diction; but it is conſidered as a vicious taſte, by the advocates for ſimplicity of language. They differ in their acceptation of the term, and the former therefore ſmile, when the latter cenſure refinement of diction.

Refinement in Style, is of no remote date. The proſe of Pope is nearly as refined as his verſe; and this taſte he appears to have borrowed from ſome of the French writers, particularly from Fontenelle, whoſe reputation was then very high, and who has carried the *bel eſprit*, to it's fineſt exceſs. By the *bel eſprit*, I mean, a manner of writing which diſplays unexpected turns of thought

thought; the art of half concealing a ſentiment that the reader may have the pleaſure of gueſſing it; brilliant alluſions, epigrammatic points, and delicate ſtrokes. A mode of writing as dangerous, as it is pleaſing; yet adapted to conciſe compoſitions. No proſaic writer, in Pope's day, approached his refinement; the beſt writers then, and for ſome time after, compoſed with colloquial barbariſms and feeble expreſſions. Steele, Tillotſon, and others, have written, with careleſſneſs and laxity; Addiſon and Dryden delight by an agreeableneſs of manner, which no where accompanied the works of their cotemporaries; their ſuperior genius ſeems to have given colour and form to their yet unformed and uncoloured language. When Addiſon deſcribes the powers of beauty, the ſuavity, the grace and the melliſluence give a new idea of our language, and Dryden has a mellow rich-

neſs

neſs, an enchanting negligence, and a facility of ideas. They alike threw into their Style a gaiety of fancy, which is equivalent to all the charms of refined expreſſions. They alone of all the writers of their age, have ſecured the admiration of poſterity; and will not be injured by any novel mode of language; for to real genius they united thoſe ſubordinate graces which are imperiſhable. To Johnſon may be attributed the eſtabliſhment of our preſent refinement; and it is with truth he obſerves of his Rambler, "that he "had laboured to refine our language "to grammatical purity, and to clear "it from colloquial barbariſms, licen-"tious idioms, and irregular combina-"tions, and that he has added to the "elegance of it's conſtruction and to "the harmony of it's cadence."* This refinement

* Great inelegance of diction diſgraced our language even ſo late as in 1736, when the enquiry into the Life of Homer was publiſhed. That author was certainly deſirous of all the graces of compoſition, and his

refinement in Style, Johnſon appears partly to have borrowed from the moſt elegant French writers, whoſe beauties he has ſometimes tranſpoſed and frequently imitated, as Gibbon has more apparently done. All the refinements of Style exiſt among that refining people, and the Lectures of Blair are often judicious repetitions of what may be found in their critics, or happy examples which are drawn from their writers.

Refinement in Style, with many, includes in the very expreſſion, a cenſureable quality in compoſition. But this criticiſm is unjuſt; refinement may indeed be vicious, as ſimplicity may itſelf

his volume by it's ſingular ſculptures evinces his inordinate affectation. This fanciful writer had a taſte for poliſhed writing. Yet he abounds in expreſſions which now would be conſidered as criminal in literary compoſition. Such vulgariſms are common—the Greeks *fell to their old trade* of one tribe's expelling another—the ſcene is always at Athens, and all the *pother* is ſome little jilting ſtory—the haughty Roman *ſnuffed* at the ſuppleneſs. If ſuch diction had not been uſual with good writers at that period, I ſhould not have quoted Blackwall.

itſelf be; refinement is not leſs offenſive to a reader of taſte, when it riſes into affectation, than ſimplicity ſinking into inſipidity. But we muſt not confound refinement of Style, with it's puerile exceſs; nor is it juſt to cenſure refinement becauſe it differs from ſimplicity. Some perhaps will agree, that a writer cannot refine too much, provided he flies not too remotely in ſearch of it's ornaments; for that which *artiſtly* employed, throws a new light, and gives a more agreeable poſition to an object, cannot be cenſured but by thoſe whoſe organs are indifferent.

Amidſt theſe complications of taſte ſome argue in favour of a natural Style, and reiterate the opinion of many great critics, that proper ideas will be accompanied by proper words. But this obſervation, though ſupported by the firſt authorities, is not perhaps ſufficiently clear. Writers may think juſtly, and write offenſively; and a pleaſing

Style

Style may convey a vacuity of thought. Does not this evident fact prove that Style and Thinking have not that inſeparable connection which many great writers have pronounced? Writing is juſtly called an Art; and Rouſſeau, ſays, it is not an art eaſily acquired. Thinking may be the foundation of Style; but it is not the ſuperſtructure; it is not the ornaments. The art of preſenting our thoughts to another, is often a proceſs of conſiderable time and labour; and the delicate taſk of correction, reſerved only for writers of fine taſte, proves, that there are ſeveral modes of preſenting an idea; vulgar readers are only ſuſceptible of the rough and palpable ſtroke; but there are many ſhades of ſentiment, which to ſeize on and to paint, is the pride and the labour of a fine writer.

In the third ſchool we obſerve, a race of writers who are called MANNERISTS in Style. It muſt be confeſſed that

that ſuch writers however great their powers, rather excite the admiration, than the affection of a man of taſte; becauſe their habitual art, diſſipates that illuſion of ſincerity, which we love to believe is the impulſe, which places the pen in the hand of an author. Two eminent literary Manneriſts are Cicero and Johnſon. We know theſe great men conſidered their eloquence as a deceptive art;* of any ſubject it had been indifferent to them which ſide to adopt; and in reading their elaborate works, our ear is more frequently gratified by the ambitious magnificence of their diction, than our heart

* The ſophiſtry of Johnſon in converſation appears to have been his favourite amuſement; but Cicero is more cenſureable, ſince in the moſt ſolemn acts of life, and before the tribunal of juſtice, he confeſſes to have protected and ſaved the life of many a criminal, by the power of his eloquence. This indeed will be conſidered as no crime at Weſtminſter-Hall, where, without his eloquence, they ſhare his guilt. Plutarch gives one anecdote relative to the orator's exultation. He ſaid to Munatius—"Doſt thou think "thou waſt acquitted for thy own ſake, and not be-"cauſe I threw a veil over thy manifeſt crimes, ſo "that the court could not perceive thy guilt?"

heart penetrated by the pathetic enthuſiaſm of their ſentiments. Writers who are not Manneriſts, but who ſeize the appropriate tone of their ſubject, appear to feel a conviction of what they attempt to perſuade their reader. It is obſervable, that it is impoſſible to imitate with uniform felicity the noble ſimplicity of a pathetic writer; while the peculiarities of a Manneriſt, are ſo far from being difficult, that they are diſplayed with nice exactneſs by midling writers, who although their own natural manner had nothing intereſting, have attracted notice by ſuch imitations. We may apply to ſome monotonous Manneriſts theſe verſes of Boileau.

Voulés vous du public meriter les amours?
Sans ceſſe en ecrivant varier vos diſcours.
On lit peu ces auteurs nés pour nous ennuier,
Qui toujours ſur un ton ſemblent pſalmodier.

Would you the public's envied favours gain?
Ceaſeleſs in writing, variegate the ſtrain;
The heavy author who the fancy calms
Seems in one tone, to chaunt his naſal pſalms.

It may, perhaps, ſurpriſe ſome, that among the literary refinements of the preſent age, may be counted above forty different Styles, as appear by a Rhetorical Dictionary. The facility of acquiring a Style produces our numerous authors; and hence we abound with writers, but have few thinkers. A Style deficient in thinking cannot form a perfect compoſition; for we may compare STYLE to the MECHANIC or executive part of painting; while THINKING is the FINE IDEAL or inventive. And this diſtinction, if juſt, will ſettle a queſtion long agitated, whether there is any diſtinction between Style and Thinking. Raphael, who excelled in the ideal, was not ſo perfect in ſome part of the mechanic, as Titian; and, we might venture to ſay, that Johnſon, who excelled in the mechanic, did not equal the ideal of Addiſon.

Mr.

Mr. Webb, an advocate for ſimplicity, has two lines on the Style of Hooker, the laſt of which has great felicity of conception.

" Thy language is chaſte, without aims or pretence;
" 'Tis a ſweetneſs of breath, from a ſoundneſs of
" ſenſe."

He accompanies them by a note, in which he cenſures refinement, as a ſtudied advantage in the manner, independent on an adequate motive in the thought. Mr. Alliſon would conſider every compoſition as faulty and defective in which the expreſſion of the art is more ſtriking than the expreſſion of the ſubject, or in which the beauty of deſign prevails over the beauty of character or expreſſion. I ſhall add the obſervation of a friend, who has often delighted the public, that he would not have the Style withdraw the attention from the Thought.

I mean not to oppoſe the opinions of the warm admirers of ſimplicity.

A beautiful ſimplicity itſelf is a ſpecies of refinement; and no writer more ſolicitouſly corrected his works than Hume, who excels in this mode of compoſition. But is it not an evident error in men of taſte to form a predilection for any peculiar Style; ſince all the intermediate ſpecies of diction between ſimplicity and refinement are equally beautiful, when they form, the appropriate tone of the ſubject? We often enquire if an author's Style is beautiful or ſublime; we ſhould rather deſire to know whether it was proper. Theſe varieties of diction, which the advocates for ſimplicity conſider as ſo many aberrations from rectitude of thinking, form on the contrary the very exiſtence of juſt thought. Simplicity, however pure, can never cauſe the ſtrong emotions of an ornamented diction; an ornamented diction can never give the rapid and lively graces of gaiety; nor can a rapid Style embelliſh

belliſh flowery and brilliant conceptions. Every Style is excellent, if it be proper, and that Style is moſt proper which can beſt convey the intentions of the author to his reader.

There appears in every Style, a certain point, beyond which, or which not attained, it is defective. The ſimplicity of the firſt ſchool degenerates into frigidity and vapidneſs; the beauty of the ſecond protracts into languor and tedioufneſs; and the grandeur of the third ſwells into turgidity and vacuity. But though this point may be difficult to deſcribe, a fine *tact* long practiſed, inſtantaneouſly diſcovers it. We ſoon decide on the Style of an author, but not on his thoughts; and we often find, that the one may be excellent, while the other has nothing uncommon.

Hume, who has all the refinement of ſimplicity, highly approves of Addiſon's definition of fine writing, who

ſays, that it conſiſts of ſentiments which are natural, without being obvious. This is ſurely no definition of fine writing, but of fine thinking. The elegant author has omitted the magical graces of diction; the modulation of harmonious cadences, the art of expreſſing, with delicacy, delicate ideas, and painting ſublime conceptions in the magnificence of language. In my opinion Shenſtone has aſcertained the truth; for fine writing he defines to be generally the effect of ſpontaneous thoughts and a laboured Style. Addiſon was not inſenſible to theſe charms, and he felt the ſeductive art of Cicero when he ſaid, that "there "is as much difference in apprehend-"ing a thought clothed in Cicero's "language, and that of a common au-"thor, as in ſeeing an object by the "light of a taper, or by the light of "the ſun." This is not leſs true, than finely expreſſed; and what ſhews Style

to

to be independent of thinking, is, that even common thoughts are found to give pleaſure when adorned by expreſſion.

I muſt therefore diſſent from the admired definition of Addiſon, becauſe it does not define it's object. In this age of taſte, or refinement, if you pleaſe, a compoſition which ſhould alone conſiſt of natural, yet not obvious, ſentiments, would fail to attract, unadorned by the felicities of diction. But I ſhall be told by ſome, that our preſent taſte, which I am here placing as the criterion of compoſition, is what they preciſely arraign. I muſt reply, that it is what I applaud. Simplicity may be too obvious, and refinement too obtruſive; whatever is obvious diſguſts; whatever is obtruſive offends. We may apply to Style in general, the beautiful deſcription which Milton gives of Eve preſenting herſelf to Adam,

"Not OBVIOUS, not OBTRUSIVE ſhe."

It appears that the advocates for ſimplicity of Style are not ſufficiently ſenſible to the varieties of diction. What, would they think, if we ſhould venture to ſay, that Style may have a marvellous influence over the human mind? Longinus makes a muſical arrangement of words a part of the ſublime, and he adds, that many have acquired the reputation of fine writers, whoſe chief merit conſiſted in the charm of their periods. This obſervation every man of taſte knows to be juſt. We have writers, who, without exhibiting much vigour of conception, or energy of genius, delight by a magical delicacy. An eloquent Style has a pathetic influence on the mind. Men of taſte, who are unbiaſſed by any particular Style, can alone be ſenſible to it's fineſt ſtrokes, and are often in raptures, when others are inſenſible. The practiſed eye in painting ſees pictures the uninitiated can never behold.

behold. An ancient artiſt, contemplating the famous Helen of Zeuxis, felt all the enthuſiaſm of extreme ſenſibility; when another wondered at his raptures, he ſaid "could you take my "eyes, you would be as much de-"lighted."

After all, it is Style alone by which poſterity will judge of a great work, for an author can have nothing truly his own but his Style; facts, ſcientific diſcoveries, and every kind of information may be ſeized by all, but an author's diction cannot be taken from him. Hence very learned writers have been neglected, while their learning has not been loſt to the world, by having been given by finer writers. It is, therefore, the duty of an author, to learn to write as well as to learn to think; and this art can alone be obtained by familiariſing himſelf to thoſe felicitous expreſſions which paint and embelliſh his ſenſations; which give a

tone

tone congruous to the ſubject; and which inveſt our thoughts with all the illuſion, the beauty and motion, of lively perception or pathetic eloquence.

HISTORICAL CHARACTERS ARE FALSE REPRESENTATIONS *of* NATURE.

WE accuſtom ourſelves to pay too liberal an admiration to the great Characters recorded in modern, to ſay nothing of ancient, Hiſtory. It ſeems often neceſſary to be reminded that the moſt intereſting hiſtory, is generally the moſt elegantly written, and that whatever is adorned by elegance, is the compoſition of art. Charmed and ſeduced by the variegated tints of imagination, the ſcene is heightened, and the objects move into life; but while we yield ourſelves to the captivating talent of the artiſt, we forget that the whole repreſentation is but a picture, and that painters like poets, are indulged with a certain agreeable licentiouſneſs. Hence we form falſe eſtimates

mates of the human character, and while we exhauſt our ſenſations in artificial ſympathies, amidſt characters and circumſtances almoſt fictitious, for the natural events and the natural calamities of life, we ſuppreſs thoſe warmer emotions we otherwiſe ſhould indulge. The human character appears diminutive when compared with thoſe we meet with in hiſtory; yet, am I perſuaded, that domeſtic ſorrows are not leſs poignant, and many of our aſſociates are characters not inferior to the elaborate delineations which ſo much intereſt in the deceptive page of hiſtory. The hiſtorian is a ſculptor, who though he diſplays a correct ſemblance of nature, is not leſs ſolicitous of diſplaying the miracles of his art, and therefore enlarges his figures to a coloſſal dimenſion.

The ancient hiſtorians compiled prodigies, to gratify the credulous curioſity of their readers; but ſince prodi-

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gies have ceaſed, while the ſame avidity for the marvellous exiſts, modern hiſtorians have transferred the miraculous to their perſonages. Children read fables as hiſtories, but the philoſopher reads hiſtories as fables. Fabulous narratives may however convey much inſtruction.

It is the pleaſing labour of genius to amplify into vaſtneſs, to colour into beauty, and to arrange the objects which occupy his meditations, with a ſecret artifice of diſpoſition. I think Voltaire in one of his Letters has let us into the myſtery of the hiſtorical art; for he there tells us, that no writers, but thoſe who have compoſed tragedies, can throw any intereſt into a hiſtory; that we muſt know to paint and excite the paſſions; and that a hiſtory, like a dramatic piece, muſt have ſituation, intrigue, and cataſtrophe. An obſervation which has great truth, but which ſhews that there can be

be but little truth in ſuch agreeable narratives. Every hiſtorian communicates his character to his hiſtory; if he is profound and politic, his ſtateſmen reſemble political deities, whoſe leaſt motion is a ſtratagem, and whoſe plot contains the ſeeds of many plots. If he is a writer, more elegant than profound, he delights in deſcriptive grandeur; in the touching narratives of ſuffering beauty, and perſecuted virtue. If he poſſeſſes a romantic turn, his heroes are ſo many Arthurs, and the actions he records, put a modeſt adventurer into deſpair. No writers more than the hiſtorian, and the profeſſed Romancer, ſo ſedulouſly practice the artifice of awakening curioſity, and feaſting that appetency of the mind, which turns from wholeſome truth, to ſpirited fiction. We love not what we are, becauſe it wants the grace of novelty; we are pleaſed with the wanderings of fancy, becauſe they

ſhoot

ſhoot far above the ſober limit of nature; we ſcarce glance at the glittering of a ſtar, but we gaze with delight on the corruſcations of a meteor. We therefore ſuffer ourſelves to become intereſted with thoſe objects which ſhould intereſt us leaſt.

The hiſtorian feiſing this inclination of the mind, delights it with that imaginary force, and fantaſtic grandeur, of which, while pleaſed with the emotions, we perceive not the extravagance. Popular prejudice aſſiſts the illuſion, and becauſe we are accuſtomed to behold public characters occupy a ſituation in life, that few can experience, we are induced to believe that their capacities are more enlarged, their paſſions more refined, and in a word, that nature has beſtowed on them faculties, denied to obſcurer men. But who, acquainted with human nature, heſitates to acknowledge, that moſt of the characters in hiſtory

were

were perſons whom accident had ſeated upon a throne, or placed with leſs favour around it? Had Alfred been a private perſon, like the Man of Roſs, his various virtues might only accidentally have reached us; and had Richard III. been a citizen of London, he had been led unnoticed to the gibbet.

This pernicious prejudice, which peoples the mind with artificial beings, and enfeebles the ſympathies of domeſtic life, will diſappear when we come to thoſe few facts in hiſtory, which the art of the hiſtorian can no longer diſguiſe; and which, refuſing the decorations of his fancy, preſent the ſublime perſonages of hiſtory, in the nudity of truth. Let the monarch loſe his crown, and the miniſter his place; let the caſque fall from the hero, and the cap from the cardinal; it is then, theſe important perſonages ſpeak in the voice of diſtreſs, are actu-

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ated by paſſions like our own, and come to us with no other claim on our feelings, than that common ſenſibility, which we owe to humanity. Here, indeed, the leſſons of hiſtory, become inſtructive, becauſe they teach that every other portion of hiſtory has received the romantic gilding of the pencil; that the ſagacity of the ſtateſman is not ſo adroit, as not to be entangled in it's own nets; that the ardour of the hero is often temerity which eſcaped, and ſometimes temerity chaſtiſed; and that in general great characters, owe much more to Fortune, than to Nature; that ſingular coincidencies have formed ſingular events; but, that whenever the deluſion of the hiſtorian ceaſes, theſe illuſtrious perſons appear to have been actuated by paſſions ſimilar to our own, and that their talents are not ſuperior to thoſe whoſe obſcure actions languiſh in a confined ſphere. It is obſerved, by Monteſ-

quieu, that " moſt legiſlators have " been men of limited capacities, " whom chance placed at the head of " others, and who have generally con- " ſulted merely their prejudices and " their fancies."

It is, indeed, uſeful to pauſe over thoſe paſſages which give the very feelings of the illuſtrious perſons to whom they relate, and if to ſome, theſe may ſeem to humble the great, they will alſo elevate us; or, rather, they will reinſtate human nature in that juſt equality in which we are all placed. The phantom of hiſtory will vaniſh, but the human form will remain palpable and true.

Few circumſtances are more curious in hiſtory than the unadorned recitals of ſome memoirs. I am pleaſed with what Thomas Heywood in his " Eng- " land's Elizabeth" has noticed relative to the confinement of this Princeſs. It is an inſtance that one of the

the moſt celebrated characters felt the ſame agitation, and expreſſed the ſame language, which an inferior priſoner would have experienced. This writer gives her meditations in the garden during her impriſonment, in which the natural paſſions are not entirely loſt in the diſtortion of the language. During her confinement at Woodſtock, hourly dreading aſſaſſination, ſhe uſed to ſit at the grate of her priſon window morning and evening, liſtening and ſhedding tears at the light carolling of the paſſing milkmaids. Among other inſults ſhe received in travelling, the high winds having diſcompoſed her dreſs, ſhe deſired to retire to ſome houſe to adjuſt herſelf; but this ſhe was refuſed, and was compelled to make her toilette under a hedge! A kindred anecdote is mentioned by Sir Walter Rawlegh, of Charles V. who juſt after his reſignation, having a private interview with ſome ambaſſador,

and having prolonged it to a late hour after midnight, called for a ſervant to light the ambaſſador on the ſtairs; but they had all retired to reſt; and the emperor, yet the terror of Europe, was obliged to ſnatch a candle and conduct the ambaſſador to the door. It is thus that majeſty, unrobed of factitious powers, convinces even the ſlow apprehenſion of the vulgar, that the breaſt of grandeur only conceals paſſions like their own; and that Elizabeth dreſſing under a hedge, and Charles lighting the ambaſſador on the ſtairs, felt the ſame bitter indignity, which they are doomed to feel much oftener.

If it were poſſible to read the hiſtories of thoſe who are doomed to have no hiſtorian, and to glance into domeſtic journals, as well as into national archives, we ſhould then perceive the unjuſt prodigality of our ſympathy to thoſe few names, which eloquence has

has adorned with all the ſeduction of her graces. We ſhould then acknowledge, that ſuperior talents are not ſufficient to obtain ſuperiority, and that the full tide of opportunity, which often carries away the unworthy in triumph, leaves the worthy among the ſhoals. It is a curious ſpeculation for obſerving men, to trace great characters in little ſituations, and to detect real genius paſſing through life incognito. How many mothers of great characters, may addreſs their ſons in the words of the Mother of Braſidas; he was indeed a great and virtuous commander, but ſhe obſerved *that Sparta had many greater Braſidas.* Some obſcure men, whom the world will never notice, had they occupied the ſituation of great perſonages, would have been even more illuſtrious. There are never wanting among a poliſhed people, men of ſuperior talents or ſuperior virtues; every great revolution evinces

this truth; indeed, at that perilous moment, they ſhew themſelves in too great numbers, and become fatal to each other, by their rival abilities.

Robertſon, who is ſo pleaſing an hiſtorian, and therefore, whoſe veracity becomes very ſuſpicious, confeſſes, however, that "in judging of the "conduct of princes, we are apt to "aſcribe too much to political mo-"tives, and too little to the paſſions "which they feel in common with the "reſt of mankind. In order to ac-"count for Elizabeth's preſent, as well "as her ſubſequent conduct towards "Mary, we muſt not always conſider "her as a queen, we muſt ſometimes "regard her merely as a woman." This is preciſely what the refining ingenuity of this writer does as rarely as any hiſtorian; and Robertſon appears to have been more adapted for a miniſter of ſtate, than the principal of a Scotch college. He explains projects

that

that were unknown, and details ſtratagems which never took place. We often admire the fertile conceptions of the queen regent; of Elizabeth; and of Bothwell; when in truth, we are defrauding Robertſon of whatever praiſe may be due to political invention.

But we, who, however charmed with hiſtoric beauty, revere truth and humanity, muſt learn to reduce the aggravated magnitude of the illuſtrious dead, that we may perform an act of juſtice to the obſcure living. The ſympathy we give to a princeſs, raviſhed from her throne and dragged by traitors, to wet with tears, the iron grates of her dungeon, we may with no leſs propriety beſtow on that unfortunate female, whom unfeeling creditors have ſnatched from maternal duties, or ſocial labours, to periſh by the hour, in ſome loathſome priſon. If we feel for the decapitation of a virtuous and long

perſecuted ſtateſman, we are not to feel leſs for that more common object, a man of genius, condemned to languiſh in obſcurity, and periſh in deſpair. A great general dies in the embrace of victory, and his character reaches poſterity in immortal language; but he probably conducted hundreds whom nature intended for generals, but whom fortune made foot ſoldiers: what heroes may be found in hoſpitals! Katharine, the queen of Henry VIII. is an object of our tendereſt ſympathy, but why ſhould our ſenſibility be diminiſhed, when we look on thoſe numerous females, not leſs gentle, nor leſs cruelly miſuſed, who, without the conſolations of ſovereignty, are united to deſpots, not leſs arbitrary and brutal than Henry? The ſorrows of the Scottiſh Mary, the refined inſults of a rival ſiſter, the grin of ſcorn, and the implication of infamy, may penetrate our hearts; but we forget that there

are families, where ſcenes not leſs terrible, and ſiſters not leſs unrelenting, are hourly diſcovered; and that there are beauties, who without being confined to the melancholy magnificence of a caſtle, or led to the diſmal honour of an axe, equally fall victims, or to fatal indiſcretion, or to fatal perſecution. But he who has filled his mind with the grand ſtrokes of hiſtorical characters, and who conceives their feelings of a more ſubtile texture, may urge, that ſuch was the ſenſibility of grief in Mary, that her beautiful treſſes had turned grey. Alas! how many are agoniſed by as ſharp corroſives, yet who know not, as their ſighs paſs away unheard, that it is the ſettled melancholy of their ſoul, which has changed their hairs grey! If ſome conſider that a queen is more wretched, by contraſt of ſituation, than an inferior female, it may be replied, that

between

between two broken hearts, the grief muſt be much alike.

The faſcination which thus takes poſſeſſion of us in hiſtorical narratives, is therefore the artifice of the hiſtorian, aſſiſted by thoſe early prejudices of that ſuperiority which we attach to great characters. He who poſſeſſes the talent of fine writing, is indeed in poſſeſſion of a deceptive art; and I have often been tempted to think, that men of genius, who have ever appeared, by the energy of their complaints, to be endowed with a peculiar ſenſibility of ſorrow, and who excel in the deſcription of the paſſions, do not always feel more poignantly than others, who without the power of expreſſing their ſenſations, expanding their ſentiments, and perpetuating their anguiſh, are doomed to ſilent ſorrow; to be crazed in love without venting effuſions in verſe, and to periſh

riſh in deſpair without leaving one memorial of their exquiſite torture.

But I will not cloſe this eſſay without obſerving, that it is not to every illuſtrious character, recorded in hiſtory, that we can pay too prodigal a tribute of admiration. There are men, who throw a new luſtre on humanity; and hold a torch of inſtruction which brightens through the clouds of Time. It has been boldly ſaid, by old Montaigne, that man differs more from man, than man from beaſt. But ſpeculations on human nature muſt not be formed on ſuch rare inſtances. Beſides, even of characters like theſe, their equals may be found among obſcure individuals, and ſome of the nobleſt actions have been performed by unknown perſons; as that Miner, who in ſome Italian war, animated by patriotic fervour, to direct the exploſion, ruſhed into the mine he had formed. This action is the ſummit of

heroiſm;

heroiſm; his name in the page of hiſtory had been that of a hero; but the individual was ſo obſcure, that nothing but the fact is recorded.

Familiar objects of diſtreſs, and familiar characters of merit, want only to form a ſpectacle as intereſting, as the pompous inflation of hiſtory can diſplay, thoſe powers of ſeducing eloquence, which diſguiſe the ſimplicity of truth, with the romantic grandeur of fiction. Nations have abounded with heroes and ſages; but becauſe they wanted hiſtorians, they are ſcarce known to us by name; and individuals have been heroes and ſages in domeſtic life, whoſe talents and whoſe virtues are embelliſhed in no hiſtorical record, but traced, in tranſient characters, on the feeble gratitude of the human heart.

On Prefaces.

WHATEVER be the conſequence of this my ſolemn proteſtation, I declare myſelf infinitely delighted by a Preface. Is it exquiſitely written? no literary morſel is more delicious. Is the author inveterately dull? it is a kind of preparatory information, which may be very uſeful. It argues a deficiency in taſte to turn over an elaborate Preface unread; for it is the odour of the authors roſes; every drop diſtilled at an immenſe coſt. It is the reaſon of the reaſoning, and the folly of the fooliſh. I agree with the Italians, who call theſe little pieces *La ſalſa del Libro*; the ſauce of the book.

I do not wiſh, however, to conceal, that ſeveral writers, as well as readers, have ſpoken very diſreſpectfully of this

ſpecies

ſpecies of literature. That fine writer, Monteſquieu, in cloſing the Preface to his Perſian Letters, ſays, "I do not "praiſe my Perſians; becauſe it would "be a very tedious thing, put in a "place already very tedious of itſelf; "I mean a Preface." Spence, in the Preface to his Polymetis, informs us, that "there is not any ſort of writing "which he ſits down to, with ſo much "unwillingneſs, as that of Prefaces; "and as he believes moſt people are "not much fonder of reading them, "than he is of writing them, he ſhall "get over this as faſt as he can; both "for the readers ſake and his own." An ingenious French writer likewiſe inveighs bitterly againſt the inventor of Prefaces, and condemns them as ſo much waſte paper. Peliſſon warmly proteſted againſt prefatory compoſition; but when he publiſhed the works of Sarraſin, was wiſe enough to compoſe a very pleaſing one. He indeed

endeavoured

endeavoured to juſtify himſelf for acting againſt his own opinions, by this ingenious excuſe, that like funeral honours, it is proper to ſhew the utmoſt regard for them when given to others, but to be inattentive to them for ourſelves.

Notwithſtanding all this evidence, I have ſome good reaſons for admiring Prefaces; and barren as the inveſtigation may appear, ſome literary amuſement can be gathered.

In the firſt place I obſerve, that a Prefacer is generally a moſt accompliſhed liar. Is an author to be introduced to the public? the Preface is as genuine a panegyric, and nearly as long an one, as that of Pliny's on the Emperor Trajan. Such a Preface is ringing the alarum bell for an author. If we look cloſer into the characters of theſe maſters of ceremony, who thus ſport with and defy the judgment of their reader, and who, by their extravagant

vagant panegyric, do conſiderable injury to the cauſe of taſte, we diſcover that ſome accidental occurrence has occaſioned this vehement affection for the author, and which, like that of another kind of love, makes one commit ſo many extravagancies.

Prefaces are indeed rarely ſincere. It is juſtly obſerved by Shenſtone in his prefatory Eſſay to the Elegies, that "diſcourſes prefixed to poetry inculcate ſuch tenets as may exhibit the performance to the greateſt advantage. The fabric is firſt raiſed, and the meaſures by which we are to judge of it, are afterwards adjuſted." This obſervation might be exemplified by more inſtances than ſome readers might chuſe to read. It will be ſufficient to obſerve, with what art, both Pope and Fontenelle, have drawn up their Eſſays on the nature of Paſtoral Poetry, that the rules they wiſhed to eſtabliſh might be adapted to their own

own paſtorals. Has accident made ſome ingenious ſtudent apply himſelf to a ſubordinate branch of literature, or to ſome ſcience which is not highly eſteemed, look in the Preface for it's ſublime panegyric. Collectors of coins, dreſſes, and butterflies, have aſtoniſhed the world with eulogiums which would raiſe their particular ſtudies into the firſt ranks of philoſophy.

It would appear that there is no lie, to which a Prefacer is not tempted. I paſs over the commodious Prefaces of Dryden, which were ever adapted to the poem, and not to poetry, to the author, and not to literature. The boldeſt Preface-liar was Aldus Manutius, who having printed an edition of Ariſtophanes, firſt publiſhed in the Preface, that Saint Chryſoſtom was accuſtomed to place this comic poet under his pillow, that he might always have his works at hand. As in that age, a ſaint was ſuppoſed to poſſeſs

every human talent, good taſte not excepted, Ariſtophanes thus recommended became a general favourite. The anecdote laſted for near two centuries; and what was of greater conſequence to Aldus, quickened the ſale of his Ariſtophanes. It was at length detected by Menage; and Monnoye, the commentator of Baillet, obſerves, that it is proper to undeceive the world reſpecting this ingenious invention of the Prefacer of Ariſtophanes.

The inſincerity of Prefaces ariſes whenever an author would diſguiſe his ſolicitude for his work, by appearing negligent and even undeſirous of it's ſucceſs. A writer will rarely conclude ſuch a Preface without betraying himſelf. I think, that even Dr. Johnſon, forgot his ſound dialectic in the admirable Preface to his Dictionary. In one part he ſays, "having laboured "this work with ſo much application, "I cannot but have ſome degree of "parental

"parental fondneſs." So far he evidently ſpeaks the natural ſentiments of every author. But in his concluſion, he tells us, "I diſmiſs it with frigid "tranquillity, having little to fear or "hope from cenſure or from praiſe." I deny the Doctor's "frigidity." This poliſhed period exhibits an affected ſtoiciſm, which no writer ever felt for a work, which was the anxious labour of a great portion of life, and which addreſſed itſelf, not merely to a claſs of readers, but to the almighty eye of literary Europe.

But if Prefaces are rarely ſincere, or juſt, they are notwithſtanding literary opuſcula, in which the author is materially concerned. A work with a poor Preface, like a perſon who comes with an indifferent recommendation, muſt diſplay uncommon merit to maſter our prejudices, and to pleaſe us, as it were, in ſpite of ourſelves. Works, ornamented by a finiſhed Pre-

face, ſuch as Johnſon not infrequently preſented to his friends or his booksellers, inſpire us with awe; we obſerve a veteran guard placed in the porch, and we are induced to conclude from this appearance, that ſome perſon of eminence reſides in the place itſelf.

In Prefaces an affected haughtineſs and an affected humility are alike deſpicable. The firſt is called by the French, "*La morgue litteraire*," the ſurly pompoſity of literature. This has been frequently practiſed by writers, who have ſucceeded in one or two works, while the failure of their other productions appears to have given them a literary hypochondriaſm. Such a Prefacer, firſt, informs us, that he is above the reach of cenſure; and cenſure therefore redoubles it's vigilance. Secondly, that he has already received the approbation of the diſcerning; that is to ſay, five or ſix gentlemen,

tlemen, who he admits to his manuſcript recitatives. And thirdly, that he cares very little for the mob; which is a kind expreſſion for thoſe who exchange ſterling money for counterfeit genius. To ſuch, we may anſwer, that no writer can ever be placed above cenſure; that after all his ſelf-eulogies and ſelf-conſolations, his readers, and not the five or ſix gentlemen, can alone give him a ſolid reputation. I ſhall notice, as a model of this "*morgue litteraire*" Dr. Armſtrong. His "Art of preſerving Health" is one of the moſt terſe, and claſſical compoſitions in the language; but moſt of his other verſe, evinces nothing but barren labour. In his lively "Sketches," he acquaints us in the Preface, that "he could give them "much bolder ſtrokes, as well as more "delicate touches, but that he dreads "the danger of writing too well, and "feels the value of his own labour too

 "ſenſibly,

" ſenſibly, to beſtow it upon the mo-
" bility." This is pure milk, com-
pared to the gall, in the Preface to his Poems. There he very modeſtly tells us, that " he has at laſt taken the " trouble to collect them. What he has " deſtroyed, would, probably enough, " have been better received by the " great majority of readers. But he " has always moſt heartily deſpiſed " their opinion." The truth is, he is only ſhewing an undue reſentment for ſome unfortunate productions. To ſpeak thus, is like a certain author, who, to excuſe his miſerable verſes, ſaid, his muſe only ſung for her own amuſement; which really is no great crime, if ſhe had not ventured to make herſelf ridiculous, by ſinging in the ſtreets.

The public are treated with another kind of contempt, when an author, inſtead of " deſtroying" like Dr. Armſtrong; profeſſes to publiſh his puerilities.

lities. This Warburton did, in his pompous edition of Shakeſpeare. In the Preface he informed the public, that his notes " were among his *younger* " *amuſements*, when he turned over " theſe *ſort of writers*." This ungracious compliment to Shakeſpeare and the public, merited that perfect ſcourging which our haughty commentator received from the ſarcaſtic canons of criticiſms. Scudery was a writer of ſome genius, and great variety. His Prefaces are remarkable for their gaſconades. In his Epic Poem of Alaric, he ſays, " I have ſuch a facility in wri- " ting verſes, and alſo in my inven- " tion, that a poem of double it's " length would have coſt me little trou- " ble. Although it contains only ele- " ven thouſand lines, I believe that " longer epics do not exhibit more em- " belliſhments than mine." And, to conclude with one more ſtudent of this claſs, Amelot de la Houſſaie in the

Preface to his Tranſlation of the Prince of Machiavel, inſtructs us, that "he "conſiders his copy as ſuperior to the "original, becauſe it is every where "intelligible, and Machiavel is fre-"quently obſcure." I have ſeen in the play bills of ſtrollers, a very pompous deſcription of the triumphant entry of Alexander into Babylon; had a prudent ſilence not anticipated imagination, the triumphant entry might have paſſed without exciting ridicule; and perhaps, one might not ſo maliciouſly have perceived how ill the four candle-ſnuffers crawled as elephants, and the triumphal car diſcovered it's want of a lid. But having pre-excited attention, we had full leiſure to ſharpen our eye. To theſe imprudent authors, and actors, we may apply a Spaniſh proverb, which has the peculiar quaintneſs of that people; *Aviendo pregonado vino, venden vinagre*; having cried up their wine, they ſell us vinegar.

A ridiculous humility in a Preface, is not leſs deſpicable. Many idle apologies were formerly in vogue for publication, and formed a literary cant, of which, now the meaneſt writers perceive the futility. A literary anecdote of the Romans has been preſerved, which is ſufficiently curious. One Albinus, in the Preface to his Roman Hiſtory, intercedes for pardon for his numerous blunders of phraſeology; obſerving that they were the more excuſeable, as he had compoſed his hiſtory in the Greek language, with which he was not ſo familiar as his maternal tongue. Cato ſeverely rallies him on this; and juſtly obſerves, that our Albinus had merited the pardon he ſolicits, if a decree of the ſenate had compelled him thus to have compoſed it, and provided he could not have obtained a diſpenſation. Are the commiſſion of faults to be forgiven, which were voluntarily committed?

The

The confeſſion of the ignorance of the language we employ, is like that excuſe which ſome writers form for compoſing on topics, of which they acknowledge their inability. A reader's heart is not ſo eaſily mollified; and it is a melancholy truth for literary men, that the pleaſure of abuſing an author is generally ſuperior to that of admiring him. One appears to diſplay more critical acumen than the other, by ſhewing, that though we do not chuſe to take the trouble of writing, we have infinitely more genius than the author. Theſe ſuppliant Prefacers are deſcribed by Boileau.

Un auteur a genoux dans une humble Preface
Au lecteur qu'il ennuie a beau demander grace;
Il ne gagnera rien ſur ce juge irrité,
Qui lui fait ſon procès de pleine autorité.

IMITATED.

Low in a humble Preface authors kneel;
In vain, the wearied reader's heart is ſteel.
Callous, the irritated judge is ſeen
To uſe him—as he uſed the magazine.

The

The moſt entertaining Prefaces in our language, are thoſe of Dryden. They exhibit numberleſs graces of a facility of ideas, and roll on with a fluency of ſtyle, forming ſo many pleaſing converſations of the author with his reader. He occaſionally interſperſes little characteriſtical ſtrokes of himſelf, and intereſts us in his momentary quarrels and vanities; and though it is ill-naturedly ſaid, by Swift, that they were merely formed,

"To raiſe the volume's price a ſhilling,"

yet theſe were the earlieſt commencements of Engliſh criticiſm, and the firſt attempt to reſtrain the capriciouſneſs of readers, and to form a national taſte. Dryden has had the candour to acquaint us with his ſecret of prefatory compoſition; for in that one to his Tales, he ſays, "the nature of "preface-writing is rambling; never "wholly out of the way, nor in it. "This I have learnt from the practice

"of

" of honeſt Montaigne." There is no great riſk in eſtabliſhing this obſervation as an axiom in literature; but, perhaps, there may be ſome danger in following it. However, ſhould a Preface loiter behind the reader's fancy, it is never difficult to ged rid of lame perſons, by eſcaping from them. The reader may make a Preface as conciſe as he chuſes.

It is poſſible for an author to paint himſelf in amiable colours, in this uſeful page, without incurring the contempt of egotiſm. After a writer has rendered himſelf conſpicuous by his induſtry or his genius, his admirers are not diſpleaſed to hear ſomething relative to him, from himſelf. Mr. Hayley, in the Preface to his Poems, has conveyed an amiable feature in his perſonal character, by giving the cauſe of his devotion to literature, as the only mode by which he could render himſelf of ſome utility to his country.

The

The animation of the whole paſſage is a teſtimony of the zeal of it's writer; and who, recollecting the perſeverance of his ſtudies, the juſtneſs of his taſte, and the elegance of his verſe, can refuſe the wreath of poetical honour? There is a modeſty in the Prefaces of Pope, even when this great poet collected his immortal works; and in ſeveral other writers of the moſt elevated genius, in a Hume and a Robertſon, which becomes their happy ſucceſſors to imitate, and inferior writers to contemplate with awe.

I conclude by obſerving, that there is in Prefaces a due reſpect to be ſhewn to the public, and to ourſelves. He that has no ſenſe of ſelf-dignity, will not inſpire any reverence in others; and the ebriety of vanity will be ſobered by the alacrity we all feel in diſturbing the dreams of ſelf-love. If we dare not attempt the rambling Prefaces of a Dryden, we may ſtill entertain

tain the reader; and ſooth him into good humour, for our own intereſt. This, perhaps, will be beſt obtained, by making the Preface (like a ſymphony to an opera) to contain ſomething analogous to the work itſelf. The mind thus attuned into a proper harmony of tone, will reſpond to the emotions we are preparing to excite, and feel the want of our work, as a deſire not elſewhere to be gratified.

Some Observations on Diaries, Self-biography, and Self-characters.

THE ſtudy of Biography is a recent taſte in Britain. The art of writing lives has been but lately known; and it was, therefore, an uſual complaint with the meagre Biographers of the laſt century, when their ſubject was a man of letters, that his life could not be deemed very intereſting, ſince he, who had only been illuſtrious in his cloſet, could not be ſuppoſed to afford any materials for the hiſtorian. The life of a prime miniſter, or the memoirs of a general, as they contained the detail of political intrigues and political oppoſition; battles or ſtratagems; were conſidered to afford happier opportunities for a writer to diſplay

diſplay the ability of his literary powers, the ſubtilty of his diſcernment, and the colouring of his deſcriptions.

But as the human mind became the great object of our inquiry, and to detect and ſeparate the ſhades of the paſſions the great aim of the Biographer; reflecting men perceived, that the philoſopher, like other men, had his diſtinct characteriſtics. The phyſical ſituation of a human being influences his moral and metaphyſical ſtate; he who has conſumed his years in ſolitude, will have another claſs of ideas than he who has been habituated to the frivolous or buſy ranks of men; he who has been always a lover, will have a character different from a ſatiriſt; he whoſe range of meditation has been circumſcribed by mean occupations and little variety, whatever be the energy of his mind, will be a different being to that mortal who has enlarged the circle of his feelings; has ſtored

his

his mind with infinite variations, and embraced and retained whatever he ſaw, wherever he went.

It has now become the labour of criticiſm, to compoſe the life of an author; and no writer can now ſucceſsfully accompliſh his Biographic attempts, unleſs he comes with a portion of that genius, the hiſtory of whoſe mind he records; he muſt poſſeſs a flexibility of taſte, which, like the cameleon, takes the colour of that object on which it reſts.

Every man, in whatever department he moves, has paſſions, which will vary even from thoſe who are acting the ſame part as himſelf. Our ſouls, like our faces, bear the general reſemblance of the ſpecies, but retain the particular form which is peculiar to the individual. He who ſtudies his own mind, and has the induſtry to note down the fluctuations of his opinions, the fallacies of his paſſions, and

the vacillations of his reſolutions, will form a journal to himſelf peculiarly intereſting, and probably, not undeſerving the meditations of others. Nothing which preſents a faithful relation of humanity, is inconſiderable to a human being. I have often obſerved, with ſurpriſe, how ſome paſs their days in noting the revolutions of the ſeaſons, the rain and the ſunſhine; the more important occupations of becoming acquainted with their own mind, has never once occurred to them, while they held the weather glaſs in their hand.

There once prevailed, and perhaps, it may not be yet quite aboliſhed, the cuſtom of a man's journaliſing his own life. Many of theſe journals yet remain in their MS. ſtate, and ſome, unfortunately for journal-writing, have been publiſhed. We are not, however, to decide on the nature of a work by the ineptitude of it's perform-

ance

ance. The writers of theſe Diaries were not philoſophers, for the age was not philoſophic. Too often they were alchemiſts, and ſometimes conſidered themſelves as magicians. Some only regiſtered the minuteſt events of domeſtic life. Dates of birth, and ſettlements of marriage, may be pardoned to the individual; but to give the importance of hiſtory to the progreſs of a purge, and to return divine thanks for the cutting of a corn, (and the edited journal of Elias Aſhmole contains few other facts,) is giving importance to objects which ſhould only be obſervable in the hiſtory of any other animal, but man. I am acquainted with a worthy gentleman, who, for this half century, is performing the ſame labours. He can tell where he dined fifty years paſt, and accompany the information with no conciſe critique. When he takes one of theſe little volumes down, he applies to himſelf the

obſervation of Martial, and ſays, he has learnt the art of living life twice over. The pleaſures of memory are delicious; it's objects muſt, however, be proportionate to the powers of viſion, and a poor, bad, or excellent dinner, is an object ſufficiently delightful, or terrible, to give play to the recordatory organs of this Diariſt. I have remarked, however, one thing from his contemptible narrative. He reſolved to diſtinguiſh the happy circumſtances of his life in red ink. In looking over his Diaries, notwithſtanding the obſcurity of his ſituation, and the humility of his deſires, I cannot find that his pen was often dipt in the crimſon ink of felicity.

An obſervation may be made on the diurnal page. He who can, without reſerve or heſitation, form ſuch a journal, may be ſafely pronounced an honeſt man. Few great men, and no villain, can purſue, with any regularity,

rity, a ſeries of their actions; not for want of patience, but of courage; could a Clive, or a Cromwell, have compoſed a Diary? Neither of theſe men could ſuffer ſolitude and darkneſs; at the ſcattered thoughts of caſual reflection they ſtarted; what would they have done, had memory marſhaled their crimes, and arranged them in the terrors of chronology? Theſe Diaries form that other Self, which Shafteſbury has deſcribed every thinking being to poſſeſs; and which, to converſe with, he juſtly accounts the higheſt wiſdom. When Cato wiſhes that every man had a glaſs window in his breaſt, it is only a metaphorical expreſſion for ſuch a Diary.

There are two ſpecies of minor Biography which may be diſcriminated; detailing our own life, and pourtraying our own character. The writing our own life has been practiſed with various ſucceſs; it is a delicate operation;

a ſtroke too much may deſtroy the effect of the whole. If once we detect an author deceiving or deceived, it is a livid ſpot which infects the entire body. To publiſh one's own life has ſometimes been a poor artifice to bring obſcurity into notice; it is the extravagance of vanity, and the delirium of egotiſm. When a great man leaves ſome memorial of his days, his deathbed ſanctions the truth, and the grave conſecrates the motive. There are certain things which relate to ourſelves, which no one can know ſo well; a great genius obliges poſterity when he records them. But they muſt be compoſed with calmneſs, with ſimplicity, and with ſincerity; the Biographic Sketch of Hume, written by himſelf, is a model of attic ſimplicity. This is the only production of a man of genius, which requires no graces of ſtyle or imagination. His pencil ſhould give dignity to the common accidents

of

of life, by it's clear and firm ſtrokes; but he ſhould be careful not to over-ſhade and adorn his ſketch, by a penciling too elaborate. If he is ſolicitous of charming and dazzling, he is not writing his life, but pourtraying the ideal adventurer of a romance. If he attempts to draw a reſemblance between himſelf and a ſuperior genius, let him be fearful of incurring the ridicule of thoſe modern artiſts, who have painted themſelves in the dreſs of Raphael and Rubens; this ſelf-admiration forms a fatal contraſt. Simplicity of language and thought, are ſweet and natural graces, which every Self-biographer ſhould ſtudy.

If, however, another Rouſſeau appears, one in whom imagination is a habit, he will, no doubt, expreſs feelings tremblingly alive, with a correſpondent delicacy in language; he will effuſe his inflammable ſoul in burning periods. But this Biography is elo-

quence; it may, indeed, as it was with Rouſſeau, be only a natural harmony from the voice of truth; but it may alſo be the artificial tones of deceit. What in Rouſſeau was nature, may in others be artifice. Self-biographers, like Hume, who ſtate facts with an attic ſimplicity, appear to ſpeak unreſervedly to the reader, and as if they propoſed only to ſupply facts, for others to explain and embelliſh.

There is another ſpecies of minor Biography, which, I am willing to believe, could only have been invented by the moſt refined and the vaineſt nation. A literary faſhion formerly prevailed with authors, to preſent the public with their own Character. I do not recollect ſuch a cuſtom among our more modeſt writers. The French long cheriſhed this darling egotiſm; and there is a collection of theſe literary portraits in two bulky volumes. The brilliant Flechier, and the refined

St.

St. Evremond, have framed and glazed their portraits. Every writer then conſidered his Character as neceſſary as his Preface. I confeſs myſelf much delighted with theſe ſelf-deſcriptions of perſons whom no one knows. I have formed a conſiderable collection of theſe portraits, and have placed them in my cabinet of curioſities, under the title of ſtrong likeneſſes of unknown perſons. Their vanity is too prominent to doubt their accuracy.

I ſhall not excite the reader's curioſity, without attempting it's gratification; and if he chuſes to ſee what now paſſes in the minds of many obſcure writers, whom he never will know, let him attend to the following character, which may not be ſo ſingular as it appears.

There was, as a book in my poſſeſſion will teſtify, a certain verſe-maker, of the name of Cantenac, who, in 1662, publiſhed in the city of Paris, the

the above-mentioned volume, containing ſome thouſands of verſes, which were, as his countrymen expreſs it, *de ſa façon*, after his own way. He fell ſo ſuddenly into the darkeſt and deepeſt pit of oblivion, that not a trace of his memory would have remained, had he not condeſcended to give ample information of every particular relative to himſelf. He has acquainted us with his ſize, and tells us "that it is rare "to ſee a man ſmaller than himſelf. I "have that in common with all dwarfs, "that if my head only, were ſeen, I "ſhould be thought a large man." This atom in creation then deſcribes his oval and full face; his fiery and eloquent eyes; his vermil lips; his robuſt conſtitution, and his effervescent paſſions. He appears to have been a moſt petulant, honeſt, and diminutive being.

The deſcription of his intellect, is the object of our curioſity, and I ſelect the moſt

moſt ſtriking traits in his own words. " I am as ambitious as any perſon can " be; but I would not ſacrifice my ho- " nour to my ambition. I am ſo ſen- " ſible to contempt, that I bear a mor- " tal and implacable hatred againſt " thoſe who contemn me, and I know " I could never reconcile myſelf with " them, but I ſpare no attentions for " thoſe I love; I would give them my " fortune and my life. I ſometimes lie; " but generally in affairs of gallantry, " where I voluntarily confirm falſe- " hoods by oaths, without reflection, for " ſwearing with me is a habit. I am " told that my mind is brilliant, and " that I have a certain manner in turn- " ing a thought, which is quite my own. " I am agreeable in converſation; " though I confeſs I am often trouble- " ſome; for I maintain paradoxes to " diſplay my genius, which ſavour too " much of ſcholaſtic ſubterfuges. I " ſpeak too often and too long; and

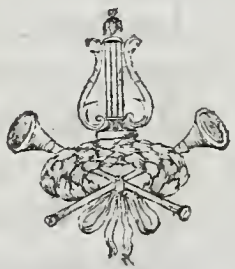
" as

" as I have ſome reading, and a copi-
" ous memory, I am fond of ſhewing
" whatever I know. My judgement
" is not ſo ſolid, as my wit is lively.
" I am often melancholy and unhappy;
" and this ſombrous diſpoſition pro-
" ceeds from my numerous diſappoint-
" ments in life. My verſe is preferred
" to my proſe; and it has been of ſome
" uſe to me, in pleaſing the fair ſex;
" poetry is moſt adapted to perſuade
" women; but otherwiſe it has been
" of no ſervice to me, and has, I
" fear, rendered me unfit for many ad-
" vantageous occupations, in which I
" might have drudged. The eſteem
" of the fair, has, however, charmed
" away my complaints. This good
" fortune has been obtained by me, at
" the coſt of many cares, and an un-
" ſubdued patience; for I am one of
" thoſe, who, in affairs of love, will
" ſuffer an entire year, to taſte the
" pleaſures of one-day."

This

This Character of Cantenac has ſome local features; for an Engliſh poet would hardly conſole himſelf with ſo much gaiety. The Frenchman's attachment to the ladies, ſeems to be equivalent to the advantageous occupations he had loſt. But as the miſeries of a literary man, without conſpicuous talents, are always the ſame at Paris, as in London, there are ſome parts of this Character of Cantenac, which appear to deſcribe them with truth. Cantenac was a man of honour; as warm in his reſentment as his gratitude; but deluded by literary vanity, he became a writer in proſe and verſe, and while he ſaw the proſpects of life cloſing on him, probably conſidered that the age was unjuſt. A melancholy example for certain volatile, and fervent ſpirits, who, by becoming authors, either ſubmit their felicity to the caprices of others, or annihilate the obſcure comforts of life,

life, and like him, having " been told " that their mind is brilliant, and that " they have a certain manner in turn- " ing a thought," become poets, and complain that they are " often melan- " choly, owing to their numerous dif- " appointments." Happy, however, if the obſcure, yet too ſenſible writer, can ſuffer an entire year, for the enjoy- ment of a ſingle day. But for this, a man muſt have been born in France.



On

On the Character of Dennis the Critic.*

It is an obſervation frequently made, by men of letters in converſation, whenever ſome renowned critic is mentioned, that "he was a very ill-na-"tured man." An obſervation which is fully verified by facts; ſo that ſometimes we are nearly tempted to ſuppoſe, that ill-nature is the ſpirit of criticiſm. The verbal or minor critics, are perſons of the ſlendereſt faculties, and the moſt irafcible diſpoſitions. What can we hope from men who have conſumed thirty pages in quarto, on the ſignification of one little word, and after this

* Since this eſſay was compoſed, I have obſerved a very copious article in the Biographia Brittanica, relative to this critic. No alterations have been made in the preſent character; for nothing contained in this eſſay, will be found in the Biographia, where Dennis has received too much honour.

this inſane diſcuſſion, have left the unhappy ſyllable to the mercy of future literary frenzy?

But there is a ſpecies of critics, who rather attach themſelves to modern, than to ancient writers; and who purſue and ſettle on a great genius; as ſummer flies attack the tails of the beſt fed horſes. The more fervid the ſeaſon, and the plumper the horſe, the livelier is the attack. They are born for the torment of the ingenious, and the gratification of the malicious of their age. It has too often happened, that a ſuperior writer has been mortified during his whole life, by ſuch a painful ſhadow; and the wreath, which the public would not otherwiſe have refuſed, has been frequently with-held, till it only covered the monumental buſt. The anceſtors of theſe critics appear to have flouriſhed in the days of Terence, and this poet has diſtinguiſhed them by the honourable

nourable title of the *Malevoli.* Zoilus, who has left them his name, the patriarch of "true criticiſm," as Swift calls their talent, fell a martyr to their cauſe; for this great man was either burnt, or crucified, or ſtoned.

In the perſon of Dennis, we may contemplate the character of theſe diſturbers of literary repoſe. Of Dennis little appears to be known; this eſſay may, perhaps, add ſomething to that little; for accident led me to an examination of his writings; writings, which, though now rarely known, once made a conſiderable figure in Engliſh literature, and which lately have been recommended by Johnſon, with more good-nature than good-taſte.

The mind of Dennis was endowed, not with refinement, but with ſubtlety; not with correctneſs, but with minuteneſs; not with critical judgment, but with critical erudition. A

prominent feature in his character, was that intellectual quality, called common ſenſe, which would have rendered him an uſeful citizen. A virtue in a ſadler, but a vice in a critic. In literature, common ſenſe is a penurious faculty, of which all the acquiſitions are mean, and of little value. If we allow him theſe qualities, we muſt utterly deny him that ſenſibility of taſte which feels the charms of an author, by a congeniality of ſpirit; that quick apprehenſion which may occaſionally point out the wanderings of genius, but which oftener confirms the pleaſures we feel, by proving their propriety; nor had he that flexibility of intellect which yields to the touch of the object before him; before he ventured to be pleaſed, he was compelled to conſult Ariſtotle.

His learning was the bigotry of literature. It was ever Ariſtotle explained by Dennis. But in the explanation

of

of the obſcure text of his maſter, he was led into ſuch frivolous diſtinctions, and taſteleſs propoſitions, that his works deſerve inſpection, as examples of the manners of a true mechanical critic. While his admiration exhales itſelf in frigid raptures, amidſt his extravagant panegyric, he appears frequently to be ignorant of the real value of the object he appreciates. Often, indeed, his purſuits conducted him to beautiful forms; but it would ſeem that they took a new and monſtrous figure beneath his diſordered viſion; to every thing he examines, he adds ſomething of his own; and the genius of Homer would ſink, blended with the dullneſs of Dennis.

That our critic was much noticed by the public, would be a national accuſation, which I am far from alledging. Several ſingular coincidencies alone gave the ephemeron critic his temporary exiſtence. Criticiſm was a no-

velty at that period of our literature. He flattered ſome great men, and he abuſed three of the greateſt; this was one mode of ſecuring popularity; becauſe, by this contrivance, he divided the town into two parties; and the iraſcibility and ſatire of Pope and Swift, were not leſs ſerviceable to him, than the partial panegyrics of Dryden and Congreve. If inſulted genius had not noticed Dennis, Dennis in vain would have inſulted genius. Sometimes his ſtrictures, though virulent, were juſt; even Zoilus, doubtleſs, detected many defects in Homer. But ſuch criticiſms are only a kind of plate-powder, very uſeful to repoliſh the works of genius. The performances of our critic appear never to have been popular; and this fact is recorded by himſelf. Of the favourable opinion he entertained of his own powers, and the public neglect they received, when not ſupported by the malignant aid of ſatire,

ſatire, the following paſſages will ſufficiently prove. In his dedication of his Miſcellaneous Tracts to the Earl of Scarborough, he obſerves, "if I had writ only the firſt treatiſe, I believe, that upon reading it, you will be of opinion, and far be preſumption from that belief, that I had deſerved better of the commonwealth of learning, than the authors of ſo many ſonorous trifles, who have been *too much encouraged*, while *I have been too much neglected*. The poſition, which is the ſubject of it, viz. That religion is that which gives principally to great poetry it's ſpirit, it's ſublimity, it's vehemence, and it's ſtrongeſt enthuſiaſm, is *very clearly proved*."

One more ſpecimen may be neceſſary. He adds, "that though criticiſm has flouriſhed for 2000 years, deſcending from antient Greece and Rome, to modern France and Italy, yet that neither Greece, nor Rome,

nor France, nor modern Italy, has treated of this important point; but that it was *left for a perſon who has the honour of being your lordſhip's countryman*, to aſſert it, and demonſtrate it. If what I have ſaid may ſeem to ſome perſons, into whoſe hands theſe ſheets may happen to fall, to have too great a tincture of vanity in it, your lordſhip knows very well, that *perſons ſo much and ſo long oppreſſed as I have been*, have been always allowed to ſay things concerning themſelves, which in *others* might be *offenſive*."

There is a degree of vanity and vexation in theſe extracts, of which the former is only excuſeable for the latter. Excuſeable, becauſe the conſideration is melancholy, that thoſe who devote themſelves to literary purſuits, and who may never know their deficiencies, ſhould become, in the imbecillity of age, the miſerable victims of their unfortunate ignorance. His va-

nity

nity we know was exceſſive, and this oppreſſion, of which he complains, might not be leſs imaginary than his alarm of being delivered over to the French, for the compoſition of a tragedy that could never be read. Dennis undoubtedly had laboured with zeal, which could never meet a reward; and perhaps, amidſt his critical labours, he turned often, with an aching heart, from their barren contemplation, to that of the ſocial comforts he might have derived from his paternal faddles.

His occaſional ſtrictures on popular works had certainly a tranſient ſeaſon. Such criticiſms were aſſiſted by the activity of envy, and by the ſupineneſs of indolence. Theſe alſo were his beſt productions, but I muſt ſtill affirm that they were the beſt productions of a dull writer. A beautiful tragedy may be compoſed, which may ſerve the purpoſes of the Denniſes; and it's er-

rors may fill their voluminous pamphlet; but alſo, it is very poſſible to conſtruct a tragedy which would famiſh the Denniſes, and at the ſame time be deſtitute of whatever can impart delight to the lover of poetry. Connoiſſeurs are to be gratified; but there is a frivolity in connoiſſeurſhip, which could enchain the wing of an eagle with a ſlight texture of ſilk.

Dennis aſpired alſo to original compoſition; but after a very fair and patient attempt to peruſe his works, I deſiſted. His verſe is the verſe of one who has learnt poetry, as the blind we know may practice the art; a mechanical operation performed by ſubſtantives and adjectives. His ſentiments are wild, and his lines irregular; turgid expreſſions in rumbling verſe; the painful throes of a muſe, who is made to produce monſters againſt the deſigns of nature. Such verſifiers

verſifiers are well deſcribed by Denham in this line; their works are

" Not the effect of poetry, but pains."

One of his curious epithets of a pair of turtles, is " venereal turtles," for I ſuppoſe, the turtles of Venus. Yet Dryden, with the uſual partiality of friendſhip, deludes Dennis by eulogies on his poetry, and, in one of his Letters, publiſhed by our author, adviſes him to apply himſelf to the pindaric. After this, I believe, Dennis produced his long rambling Ode in praiſe of Dryden, which, perhaps, equals the worſt of Cowley's.

His proſe has little animation, except when he warms into abuſe. His conceptions, indeed, were never delicate; but ſometimes their groſſneſs is ſtriking; as what he ſays of Puns, in one of his Letters, " there is as much difference between the ſilly ſatisfaction which we have from a quibble, and the raviſhing pleaſure which we receive

ceive from a beautiful thought, as there is betwixt a faint ſalute, and fruition."

His criticiſms are often ſo many caſtles in the air, for almoſt in every work he is propoſing and explaining ſome fantaſtical ſyſtem. In his long treatiſe on modern poetry, he labours to ſhew, that the ſtrong intereſt which the ancients felt in their poetry, was derived from that uſe of religion which their poets employed; and therefore, he concludes, that if religion is introduced into our poems, modern poetry will rival the ancient. But how falſe this ſyſtem is, criticiſm and experience have now poſitively decided. Religion is too aweful an object for the religious to permit human inventions to ſport with; and the philoſopher will acknowledge, that excellence and omnipotence not conceivable by finite faculties, are degraded and enfeebled by human ideas and human language.

Polytheiſm

Polytheiſm was a religion well adapted to poetical fancies; ſince nothing can be more poetical than an endleſs train of beings, diverſified in their characters, and diſtinguiſhed by their emblems. The brilliancy of imagination, the gaieties of deſcription, and the conflict of the paſſions, alike formed a human intereſt in the deities of the ancients. But the unity of our religion teaches only the leſſon of obedience, and throwing a veil over the myſterious deity, would conſider deſcription as impiety, and ſilence, as the only expreſſion of the human paſſions.

Having concluded what I had to obſerve, on the literary character of Dennis, I ſhall now conſider his moral one. The leſſon may not prove uninſtructive, for we ſhall have an opportunity of contemplating how an ill-natured critic, is an ill-natured man, and that the perverſions of the head, are

are ſo many particles of venom which fly from the heart.

The magiſterial deciſions of criticiſm, may, I ſuſpect, communicate a perſonal importance to it's author. Accuſtomed to ſuſpend the ſcourge over the heads of the firſt writers of the age, it appears, that Dennis could not ſit at a table, or walk down a ſtreet, without exerting the deſpotic rudeneſs of a literary dictator. The brutal violence of his mind, was diſcoverable in his manners; an odd mixture of frantic enthuſiaſm, and groſs dullneſs. Pride now elevated, and vaunting, now depreſſed and ſore. How could the mind that devoted itſelf to the contemplation of maſter pieces, only to reward it's induſtry, by detailing to the public, their human frailties, experience one hour of amenity, one idea of grace, one generous expreſſion of ſenſibility? Pope's celebrated deſcription of the perſonal manners

manners of our critic, is an exact repreſentation.

> Lo! Appius reddens at each word you ſpeak;
> And ſtares tremendous with a threatening eye,
> Like ſome fierce tyrant in old tapeſtry:

Dennis had ſo accuſtomed himſelf to aſperity, and felt with ſuch facility and force, the irritation he gave and he received, that without having left, on record but the ſuſpicion of one immoral action, (for it is ſaid he ſtabbed a man at college) we ſuſpect the improbity of his heart, when we recollect the licentiouſneſs of his pen. But this has ever been the characteriſtic of this race of critics. They attach to the writer they attack, an inveteracy, which is not permitted by common humanity. From their darkened cloſet, they ſuppoſe, that the affairs of civil life are ſuſpended, in an aweful pauſe, for their deciſions; and they think, that when they have diſcovered the want of unity in a tragedy, that, in conſequence,

conſequence, the ſame want is immediately to take place among the public.

A critic reſembling Dennis, was Gaçon, in France. This Zoilus reproached La Motte with his blindneſs, and Dennis cruelly cenſured the feeble frame of Pope. Young, in his ſecond Epiſtle to Pope, ſarcaſtically alluded to Dennis, in theſe words,

> "My narrow-minded ſatire can't extend
> To Codrus' form, I'm not ſo much his friend;
> Himſelf ſhould publiſh that (the world agree)
> Before his works, or in the pillory."

Gaçon wrote "ſatyrical diſcourſes on all kinds of ſubjects," and compiled a volume of calumnies againſt the poet Rouſſeau, which he entitled an Anti-Rouſſeau; *Anti* was long a favourite title to the works of ſuch critics. Whenever there appeared a great genius, he immediately found an antipode.

An anecdote, little known, relative to Dennis, will cloſe his character.

It

It appears, that the Provoked Huſband was acted for his benefit, which procured him about a hundred pounds. Thomſon and Pope generouſly ſupported the old critic, and Savage, who had nothing but a verſe to give, returned them poetical thanks, in the name of Dennis. When Dennis heard theſe lines repeated (for he was then blind) his critical ſeverity, and his natural brutality, overcame that grateful ſenſe he ſhould have expreſſed, of their kindneſs and their elegance. He ſwore "by G— they could be no one's but that *fool* Savage's." This, perhaps, was the laſt peeviſh ſnuff from the diſmal torch of criticiſm, for two days after was the redoubted Dennis numbered with "the mighty dead."

Criticiſm has thus been often only the natural effect of bad diſpoſitions; when ſevere, if founded on truth, it is not blamed; but this truth includes the idea of a critic convincing his reader,

reader, that he has a juſt taſte for the beauties of a compoſition; for that cenſure which only takes a partial review of a work, muſt be defective. There is a duty we owe to the public, when we defend the cauſe of taſte, but at the ſame time, there is a duty we owe to the author. A ſkilful cenſor will perform his taſk by a happy combination of humanity and criticiſm; and it is elegantly ſaid of Boileau, by Voltaire, that the honey which this bee extracted from the flowers, ſoftened the ſharpneſs of the wound he inflicted.

A critic is only the footman of a man of genius, and ſhould ſo far reſpect his maſter, as not to ſuffer the torch of criticiſm, which he carries before him, to ſcorch, but only to enlighten.

On Erudition and Philosophy.

It is neceſſary to diſcriminate between Men of Erudition, and Men of Philoſophy. We muſt employ the French word *Erudit*, for want of a ſynonimous appellative.

A numerous claſs of ſtudents devote their days to reſearches in almoſt every ſpecies of knowledge; and without any profundity of obſervation, or impulſe of genius, collect bodies of facts, which may ſerve as materials for literary ſpeculation. But of theſe, few have invigorated their reaſon, improved the finer ſenſations of the mind, or ſeiſed on thoſe graces which delight in elegant compoſition. We are at once aſtoniſhed and diſguſted at their vaſt reading; they ſeem to know every thing that requires not to be known.

With them, perſevering ſtudy ſtands in lieu of extenſive genius, and a long memory in place of a bright fancy. It is not who has greater talents, but who has read moſt. Philoſophy conſiſts of reflection; Erudition of reading. As one man cannot read much more than another, in the ſame given time, the Erudits, at a certain period of life, are, therefore, all nearly equal, in point of ability. It is not ſo in Philoſophy; there one man in a year may reach farther, than another in all his life; Time, therefore, may make an Erudit, but it is Genius only which can form a Philoſopher.

When the elaborate labours of an Erudit, are at length publiſhed, it is diſcovered, that he has no ſkill in the art of compoſition. Such writers never become public favourites; their eye never dwells on an image which might enliven, or their ear on a cadence which might harmoniſe, a period.

riod. This numerous race of literati, have no conception of that delight in compoſition, without which, the writer is in vain learned. Some conſider the pleaſures of literature as not only ſuperfluous, but criminal; and that a reflection, they might happen to make, would only inſult their reader's underſtanding. An annaliſt is therefore preferred to an hiſtorian; Hume is cenſured, for intermingling with his lucid narrative, his acute reflections; and they affirm that they are capable of reflecting for themſelves. But this is neither modeſty nor truth.

Among reaſoning men, ſuch ſtudents have occaſioned a great odium to literature; and if, as it cannot be denied, the purſuits of letters have been often ſatiriſed, it has been owing to their laborious trifling, and impertinent information. Montaigne has declaimed againſt them, in various parts

of his works;* and, I lament, has in this invective, involved the more amiable ſtudies. A writer of imagination can do whatever he chooſes, but a reader of judgment will not approve of all that he finds in ſuch a writer, no more probably, than the writer did himſelf. It is not, indeed, ſufficient to write about, but to reaſon on antiquity; and a ſtudent hardly merits the honours of learning, whoſe ſcience conſiſts in an arid knowledge of words, or cuſtoms, and who renders ſome of the moſt pleaſing inveſtigations repulſive to men of taſte. Erudition is a rod in the hand of a Prideaux, and a ſceptre in the hand of a Gibbon.

Do we not abuſe too often the word learning? He is honoured with the title, who has only retained by rote, obſolete cuſtoms, extinct characters, and whatever relates to paſt ages. But he who is more ſolicitous of familiariſing

* See particularly his Chapter on Pedantry.

liariſing himſelf to his own times, and is converſant with whatever relates to his own century, who has little by rote, and a great deal by thinking, him we degrade to a lower department, and we call him a man of reading. He who hazards not a word in his latinity, but which is authoriſed by the uſe of Cicero, is ſaluted as a ſcholar; yet ſhould another not be quite ſo lexicographic in his compoſition, but as eloquent as Cicero, we ſhould conſider him as of inferior learning to his pedantic rival. If a claſſical ſcholar, verſifies in Greek, an Engliſh poem, which, in the moſt favourable view, is only acting well the ſchool-boy in the maturity of life, we dignify him with eulogies, which the true poet, he verſifies, could not more have merited. For my part, I only conſider as learning that which a man knows by reflection; for that only is of any utility to the individual and the public. It is of

no conſequence to *remember*, that ſuch a word is to be found in Cicero; that the name of one barbarian, ſucceeded the name of another barbarian, on barbarous thrones; that ſuch faſhions prevailed in the reign of ſuch a monarch; and all that multifarious minute trifling which conſtitutes what moſt term *learning*.. To *reaſon* on ſuch particulars is at leaſt an attempt to enlighten, but to *remember* them is nothing. There is more ingenuity in unriddling enigmas, and in writing acroſtics, than ſome, who are conſidered as eminent ſcholars, exert in their literary labours. It is as rare to find among men of genius, an Erudit, as among Erudits to diſcover a man of genius.

Such are they who ſtudy fourteen hours a day, and indefatigably puſh on their heavy ſyſtems throughout life. Schioppius detected 500 blunders in 120 pages of Scaliger; and Holſtenius diſcovered

diſcovered 8000 in Baronius! Madame Dacier affirmed ſhe had read Ariſtophanes 200 times; and one Berlugerius was ſo inſane a reader of Homer, that he was excommunicated for reading him at church. He at laſt, with reſtleſs impatience, undertook an excurſion to the fields of Troy, but is ſuppoſed to have loſt his way. One cannot but ſmile at the manner with which one of this venerable fraternity cloſes his Hiſtory of the World; "in my ſecond book" (ſays he) "the world may judge by my reflections and remarks, whether I have diſcernment and genius." The ſchool of low commentators is admirably depicted, by the terſe and lively taſte of Armſtrong.

"The ſtrong-built pedant, who both night and day
Feeds on the coarſeſt fare the ſchools beſtow,
And crudely fattens at groſs Burman's ſtall."

Many are familiar with the Latin and the Grecian compoſitions, whom the Latins and the Greeks, full of taſte

and ſenſibility, would never have admitted into their ſociety.

Men of an elevated fancy, have ever treated theſe induſtrious ſtudents with great contempt. Hobbes ſaid, that had he read as much as ſome learned men, he had been as ignorant as them. The ſingular opinion of Deſcartes, and his pupil Malebranche, reſpecting Erudition, is one of their fanciful wanderings. Theſe celebrated metaphyſicians aſſert, that the proper ſtudy of man is truth, conſidered as it relates to himſelf; that this can only be found in Philoſophy, and that hiſtory only preſents us with trivial or imperfect copies. They conceived more truth to be contained in a moral precept, than in an hiſtorical fact; and they, therefore, preferred the cultivation of the underſtanding, to that of the memory.

This erroneous ſyſtem has, indeed, been oppoſed; and Bolingbroke obſerves from an ancient, that "Hiſtory

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is Philoſophy teaching by Example." The cenſure of Malebranche will, however, be juſtly pointed at all hiſtories compoſed by the mere Erudits. A maſs of minute facts may prove the author to be a profound antiquary, but a ſhallow philoſopher; and it may be obſerved of hiſtorical compoſition, that the philoſopher generally begins at thoſe periods where the antiquary concludes.

Theſe Erudits are characteriſed by an enormous paſſion for collecting books. They were once called *Helluones Librorum*. But this book-gluttony is without digeſtion or taſte.* An indulgence

* The following notices of theſe collectors are curious; the firſt I find in the Pithæana, in an explanatory note by Maiſeaux. "BIBLIOTAPHE. on appelle Bibliotaphe, ou *Tombeau des Livres*, celui qui ayant quelque Livre rare et curieux ne le communique á perſonne; mais le garde ſous la clef, et l'enterre, pour ainſi dire, dans ſon Cabinet."

Dr. Wendeborn very judiciouſly obſerves, that "the price given in public ſales, for what are called *Editiones principes*, have often aſtoniſhed him, and are not conſiſtent with reaſon, which, however, with thoſe who are called Dilettanti, may be out of the queſtion."

dulgence for the bibliomania, the taſte for claſſing books, and the judgment ſhewn in their various editions, are doubtleſs innocent objects, till they render a man ridiculous. The owner becomes ſo deeply read in titles and indexes, that often he who had ſufficient talent to form a catalogue, has conceived himſelf capable of adding

queſtion." Such literary imbecillities are tranſmitted from poſſeſſor to poſſeſſor, and are often exhibited at the public ſales of the ingenious Mr. Leigh, whoſe hammer, has more than once, fallen from his hand, in aſtoniſhment at the prices he received. Koecherus has written a Treatiſe on Literary Idolatry. To conclude this note by a characteriſtical anecdote, I ſhall give one of Tom Hearne, which the late Mr. Warton has inſerted in his Eſſay on Spenſer. When this laborious antiquary publiſhed the Chronicle of Robert of Glouceſter, he entered into a warm defence of the *old black letter*, and ſays, it is a reproach to us, that the B. L. which was ſo much in uſe in our grandfather's days, ſhould be now, as it were, diſuſed; and (he adds) " though I have taken ſo much pleaſure in peruſing the Engliſh Bible of the year 1541, yet 'tis nothing equal to that I ſhould take in turning over that of the year 1539!" Indeed, ſuch is the propenſity of theſe ſtudents, that ſome great commentators on Shakeſpeare, it is ſaid, are not allowed to viſit the library at Cambridge, without a guard, as it has been diſcovered, that theſe amateurs are not the moſt honeſt men, amidſt a **black letter** collection. A number of anecdotes prove this to have been an old habit.

ding a volume of his own. To theſe dull poſſeſſors of rich libraries, we cannot but obſerve, that the acquiſition of the fineſt muſical inſtruments, imparts not the art of the muſician.

Such an one will, probably, be a man of mean talents, and ſlender judgment. He will collect every thing, till he embarraſſes his feeble faculties; and amidſt all the information poſſible, will ſtand irreſolute and ignorant. Diſcordant opinions he perceives; but to elicit truth from their concuſſion, demands that ſkill and energy which few Erudits have poſſeſſed. When one is exerciſed in collecting facts, but a ſlight attention is required, and while the higher faculties are quieſcent, the infatuated compiler conſiders them as active; but, in truth, it is only the hand that tranſcribes, not the head that thinks. The common-place book is crouded with facts, while the mind makes not the acquiſition of

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one ſolitary idea. This Erudition is a groſs luſt of the mind; it ſeiſes on every thing indiſcriminately, yet produces nothing; it is paſſion without fruition.

A philoſopher having the ſame topics, will ſelect the leading circumſtances only as his chief authorities. The art of rejecting, is not leſs important than the art of accumulating; half, ſays Heſiod, is more than the whole. He who wearies all, without wearying himſelf, ſmothers the ſparks of his fire, by the heaps of his fuel; but a philoſopher lights a little wood with the clear and durable flame of genius. It is, perhaps, not too bold, to affirm that the diſcoveries of meditation, are more numerous than thoſe of reading; for meditation can penetrate into thoſe ages where facts are unrecorded. It has been ſometimes found, that a philoſopher, without any other data than his own meditations,

tions, has accounted for circumſtances, which have been confirmed by facts, long afterwards diſcovered by the tardy dullneſs of the torpid antiquary. Meditation anticipates evidence, or educes from evidence novel truths.

Let us contemplate theſe Erudits, as the critics of a claſſical author. Such critics are more delighted by an obſcure expreſſion in a fine ſentence, than with the ſentence itſelf; as oculiſts are not diſpleaſed when their friends have infirm eyes. But even the humble province of annotation, by a philoſophic genius, becomes no contemptible labour; and Johnſon's notes, which are not the moſt eſteemed by his unworthy fraternity, frequently appear like an accidental wave rolling with vehemence down a ſtagnant ſtream.

Thoſe violent panegyrics with which they idoliſe an author, are as inſincere, as they are diſguſtful. When a pedant

dant throws an offering of flowers, on the altar of the Graces, he acts not with the ardour, but the hypocriſy of devotion. We have ſeen theſe Erudits bring forward ſome forgotten writer, and who deſerved to be ſo, with a pomp of eulogium that the greateſt cannot merit; and even the legitimate applauſe due to celebrated authors, they render ridiculous. Theſe ponderous minds have been well deſcribed by Voltaire, when he obſerves of Dacier, *Qu'il connoiſſoit tout des anciens hors la grace et la fineſſe.* Senſibility of taſte rarely directs their choice of an author; but merely the accidental collection of a number of notes, and often a more trivial circumſtance. We have had new editions of obſolete writers, becauſe their commentator was born in the ſame town, or in the ſame kingdom. Authors have been more frequently given for the notes, than what ſhould be, the notes for the author.

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Thus Duchat publiſhed editions of ſeveral obſcure writers, becauſe, having directed his reſearches to the middle ages, he was deſirous to diſcharge his adverſaria on the public. Scaliger prefered Virgil to Homer, becauſe Virgil was his fellow-countryman, and Dacier prefered Homer to all paſt and future poets, becauſe he was the moſt ancient.

He who has grown hoary in Erudition, becomes untractable by his vanity. He regards his hourly diſcoveries with a ſpirit of ſelf-exultation, which places him far above the attainments of the philoſopher. He who is directed by reaſon, and relies more on his thinking, than his Erudition, makes few, and often late, diſcoveries; he who cultivates taſte, often turns, with diſpleaſure, from unimportant topics; but he who collects and arranges facts, felicitates himſelf with new and facile acquirements, and as

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he explores the interminable deſert of Erudition, amaſſes a vaſt and mingled treaſure, and exults in an apparent ſplendour. Milton deſcribes the Erudit, who, he ſays,

> " Uncertain and unſettled ſtill remains;
> Deep verſt in books, and ſhallow in himſelf;
> Crude, or intoxicate, collecting toys,
> As children gathering pebbles on the ſhore.
>
> *Paradiſe Regained.*"

Whenever learning is made to conſiſt in words or facts, it is amuſing to obſerve it's effects operating on it's votariſts. The inſolence of an antiquary has no parallel, whenever a ſubject congenial to his ſtudies is agitated; becauſe, having, with much commendable pains, and many patient years, traced the object through all it's poſſible connections, he knows whatever can be urged, and is conſcious that the ſpeaker cannot have acquired more than himſelf.* This gives birth to many

* Of Anthony Wood, Biſhop Nicholſon obſerves, in his Engliſh Hiſtorical Library, that " he had his ſhare

many extravagancies of lettered vanity; and I have obſerved two recondite antiquaries, kindling in diſpute, while one had, perhaps, only a month's, or a day's more reading than his adverſary. It is thus alſo with linguiſts. No claſs of ſtudents have more exalted notions of their talents, than good linguiſts; for having perfected themſelves in the verbal ſcience, they conſider that words are ſcience itſelf, and do not recollect that they are but the keys of the gates. I knew a linguiſt who affected to ſpeak lightly of Voltaire, becauſe he could not pronounce Engliſh, as well as our maſter of languages; and another, who having compiled a grammar, dedicated it to the nation, who honour original genius, and boaſt of a Newton.

Such is the character of thoſe who would place a convenient limit to the

ſhare of that *peeviſhneſs* and *auſterity* (both in his ſtyle and manner) which is commonly incident to *antiquaries*.

human faculties, and ſatisfied with digging out from the graves of time, ſome dead fact, conſider knowledge to be obtainable by the pertinacity of mechanical labour. But as a linguiſt may combine and know every word in a language, and yet never attain to any ſkill in compoſition, ſo the Erudit may heap fact upon fact, and, notwithſtanding, never enlighten. Philoſophy alone can throw the creative beam of light over the dark chaos of Erudition, and awaken into order and beauty the ſurrounding maſs.

But even Philoſophy will not be ſufficient to render learning attractive; we muſt alſo employ the elegancies of compoſition, and cover the aridity of reſearch with the freſheſt roſes of taſte. Moſt of the French academicians, in their learned memoirs, have claims on our applauſe and imitation; they inſtruct us to give the bloom of youth to the wrinkles of learning, and while

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we form an accurate and lucid recital of facts, to interweave reflections which intereſt, and to embelliſh with a ſtyle which enchants. We muſt have learning to collect facts; judgment to ſeiſe on thoſe which converge to one point, and a brilliant taſte to animate and adorn.

On Poetical Opuscula.

PLINY, in an Epiſtle to Tuſcus, adviſes him to intermix among his ſeverer ſtudies, the ſoftening charms of poetry; and notices a ſpecies of poetical compoſition, which merits critical animadverſion. I ſhall quote Pliny, in the language of his celebrated tranſlator. He ſays, "theſe pieces commonly go under the title of Poetical Amuſements; but theſe amuſements have ſometimes gained as much reputation to their authors, as works of a more ſerious nature. It is ſurpriſing how much the mind is entertained and enlivened by theſe little poetical compoſitions, as they turn upon ſubjects of gallantry, ſatire, tenderneſs, politeneſs, and every thing, in ſhort, that

that concerns life, and the affairs of the world."

This ſpecies of poetry can only exiſt in an age when refinement is introduced into literature, as well as into every thing elſe. We muſt, therefore, look for it, in the preſent day, among a people the moſt refined among it's neighbours; and we obſerve, that it has been carried to it's utmoſt perfection, by the French. It has been diſcriminated by them, from the maſs of poetry, under the apt title of "*La Poeſie legere*," and ſometimes it has been ſignificantly called "*Vers de Societé*." The French writers have formed a body of this fugitive poetry, which no european nation can rival; and to which both the language and genius, of that once gay and poliſhed people, appear to be greatly favourable.

The "*Poeſies legeres*" are not, as their title would appear to import, merely compoſitions of a light and gay

turn, but are equally employed as a vehicle for tender and pathetic ſentiment. They are never long, for they are conſecrated to the amuſement and delight of ſociety. Their ſubjects are illimitable; but it is required, that ſince the author is indulged to ſport in ſmall extent, and on a variety of topics, that the undeſcribable power of originality, gives a value to every little production. The author appears to have compoſed them for his pleaſure, not for his glory; and he charms his readers, becauſe he ſeems careleſs of their approbation.

The verſification cannot be too refined; melodious and glowing, it ſhould diſplay all the graces of poetry. Every delicacy of ſentiment, muſt find it's delicacy of ſtyle, and every tenderneſs of thought, muſt be ſoftened by the tendereſt tones. Sometimes they ſhould enchant by diſcovering the moſt voluptuous air, ſometimes they ſhould attract

tract by displaying the splendid ornaments of diction, and sometimes they may please by the natural simplicity of ingenuousness. Nothing trite or trivial, either in the expression or the thought, must enfeeble and chill the imagination; nor must the ear be denied it's gratification, by a rough or careless verse. In these works nothing is pardoned; a word may disturb, a line may destroy the charm.

The passions of the poet, may form the subjects of his verse. It is in these writings he delineates himself; he reflects his tastes, his desires, his humours, his amours, and even his defects. In other poems, the poet disappears under the feigned character he assumes; here alone he speaks, here he acts. He makes a confident of the reader, interests him in his hopes, and his sorrows; we admire the poet, and conclude with esteeming the man. In these effusions the lover may not un-

ſucceſsfully urge his complaints; his miſtreſs, at leaſt, will have the conſolation of not being wearied by voluminous grief. They may form a compliment for a patron, or a congratulation for an artiſt; a vow of friendſhip, or a hymn of gratitude.

Theſe poems have often, with great ſucceſs, diſplayed pictures of Manners; domeſtic deſcriptions are ever pleaſing; and it is here that the poet colours the objects with all the hues of life, and the variations of nature. Reflections muſt, however, be artfully interwoven, in a compreſſed and rapid manner. Moral inſtruction muſt not be amplified; theſe are pieces devoted to the fancy; and while reflection is indulged, the imagination feels itſelf defrauded; a ſcene may be painted throughout the poem; a ſentiment muſt be conveyed in a verſe. In the Grongar Hill of Dyer, we diſcover ſome ſtrokes which may ſerve to exemplify

emplify this criticiſm. The poet contemplating the diſtant landſcape, obſerves,

> " A ſtep methinks may paſs the ſtream,
> So little, diſtant dangers ſeem;
> So we miſtake the future's face,
> Ey'd thro' Hope's deluding glaſs."

Moral reflections, which are uſually obvious and tedious, if thus naturally educed, and rapidly ſtruck off, contraſt with great beauty the lighter and more airy parts.

It muſt not be ſuppoſed, that becauſe theſe productions are conciſe, they have, therefore, the more facility; we muſt not conſider the genius of a poet diminutive, becauſe his pieces are ſo; nor muſt we call them, as a fine ſonnet has been called, a difficult trifle. A circle may be very ſmall, yet it may be as mathematically beautiful and perfect as a larger one. To ſuch compoſitions we may apply the obſervation of an ancient critic, that

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though a little thing gives perfection, yet perfection is not a little thing. Theſe compoſitions may, by the ſkill of the poet, be made to contain beauties of every kind; but what is even ſuperior to beauty, and in what ſome of our fineſt poets have failed, is that grace, that colouring of fancy, that harmony of ideas, that deliciouſneſs of ſentiment, which, pervading every particle of the compoſition, is perceived by the ſenſibility of taſte, while it eludes the analyſing touch of criticiſm. Theſe little pieces are ſuſceptible of all the variety of poetical expreſſion; from the ſilver notes of the paſtoral flute, to the ſonorous ſwell of the epic trumpet. They may be all delicacy, or all grandeur.

The poet, to ſucceed in theſe hazardous pieces, muſt be an amiable voluptuary; alike poliſhed by an intercourſe with the world, as with the ſtudies of taſte; to whom labour is negligence;

negligence; refinement a ſcience, and art a nature. Genius will not always be ſufficient to impart that grace of amenity which ſeems peculiar to thoſe, who, among other advantages, are accuſtomed to the elegance of the higher claſſes of ſociety; I mean, however, among the few enlightened individuals of this deſcription. Many of the French nobility, who cultivated poetry, have, therefore, often excelled in theſe poetical amuſements, the attempts of ſome profeſſed poets. France once delighted, and placed in the firſt rank of poetical taſte, the amiable and ennobled names of Nivernois, Boufflers, and St. Aignan; they have not been conſidered as unworthy rivals of Chaulieu and Bernard, of Voltaire and Greſſet. But theſe productions are more the effuſions of taſte, than genius; and it is not ſufficient that the poet is inſpired by the muſe, but he muſt alſo ſuffer his conciſe page to be

poliſhed

poliſhed by the hand of the Graces. He muſt not hope to be crowned with laurels, but he may receive a wreath of flowers.

All the minor odes of Horace, and the entire Anacreon, are compoſitions of this kind; effuſions of the heart, and pictures of the imagination, which were produced in the convivial, the amatory, and the penſive hour. Our nation has not always been ſucceſsful in theſe performances; they have not been kindred to it's genius. With Charles II. ſomething of a gayer and more airy taſte was communicated to our poetry; but it was deſultory, incorrect, and wild. It was the awkward eſſays towards refinement, which a ruſtic may be ſuppoſed to make. Among the minor poets of that period, we occaſionally trace the verſatile ſpirit of theſe poems. Waller, both by his habits, and his genius, was well adapted to excel in this lighter poetry;

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and he has often attained the perfection which the ſtate of the language then permitted. Prior has a variety of ſallies; but his humour is ſometimes groſs, and his verſification is ſometimes heavy and embarraſſed. He knew the value of theſe charming pieces; and he had drank of this burgundy in the vineyard itſelf. He has ſome tranſlations, and ſome plagiariſms; but ſome of his verſes to Chloe are eminently airy and pleaſing. We have few wri- of this claſs, who can be propoſed as models. A popular poet of this age has often delighted us with the delicate graces of his muſe; and while we admire the felicity of his cloſes, he teaches us the value of a happy thought. But thoſe minor poems, relating to domeſtic paſſions, and domeſtic manners, which might merit to be diſtinguiſhed by the title of "VERS DE SOCIETE'," appear ſtill to be wanted; and a poet who ſhould compoſe

poſe theſe fugitive pieces with felicity, might, even in the preſent day, be regarded as a new ornament to Engliſh poetry.

On "the Enlightened Public," and "the Age of Reason."

RICHARDSON makes a pleaſing compariſon of national virtues, which, ſays he, are firſt like the ſeed, which produces the blade, then the green ear, and laſtly the ripe corn. A progreſſive ſtate is obſervable in the moral, like that in the natural world, and may alſo be traced in the character of an individual, as well as in that of a people.

But it is not with the human head, as with the human heart. The perfection of any virtue is obtainable, but perhaps never that of knowledge; the actions of a hero are perfect, but the works of a ſcholar may in time be found erroneous; Alexander is ſtill our hero, but Ariſtotle has ceaſed to be

be our preceptor. Learning is variable and uncertain, virtue is ſimilar and permanent; an action of benevolence, or heroiſm, can never change in it's nature, but a ſyſtem of philoſophy, or a ſchool of taſte, muſt be annihilated by new philoſophies and new taſtes.

Some ſpeculative moderns have formed extravagant notions of that almoſt unimaginable perfection, to which human knowledge is rapidly conducting us. Hartley, in one of his ſublime and incomprehenſible imaginations, leaves it to the knowledge of the next age to trace and comprehend. Some living philoſophers, who are only adding the Engliſh denſity of thinking to the French ſubtilty of fancy, conjecture that we may ſo improve our organiſation, as to extend our duration; that the mind may attain an infinite perfectibility; and that the intellectual faculties are tranſmiſſible from the parent to the ſon, as ſometimes are the

the features and the habits. Philoſophical conjecture rolling with this oſcillatory motion, is merely an inebriation of poetry.

We are, however, inceſſantly reminded of the *enlightened* ſtate of the public; but the teſtimony of authors becomes ſuſpicious, for in perſuading us that we are thus illuminated, they infer by implication that they are ſingularly ſo, ſince they give us very uſeful inſtruction. The expreſſion was, I think, firſt the happy coinage of Voltaire, made current by his numerous diſciples; Voltaire adored the public and himſelf; and this artful expreſſion is at once imprinted with adulation and egotiſm.

It is certain that in former periods the human mind ſhot from a radical vigour, and flouriſhed in the richeſt luxuriance. Among the ancients, notwithſtanding they were heathens, the fine and mechanical arts have been

conſidered to have exceeded our happieſt efforts ; and as for the intellectual powers and the moral duties, though moſt of the compoſitions of theſe ancients have been loſt, yet enough have remained to ſerve as models for our greateſt poets ; to inſtruct our orators in the arts of eloquence ; our hiſtorians in the compoſition of hiſtory, and to leave nothing for our moraliſts, but an expanſion of the obſervations of Seneca and Epictetus.

Had one of our modern philoſophers lived in thoſe ages, would he not, in the enthuſiaſm of his meditations, have expreſſed the flattering ſentiment now ſo prevalent ; and throwing his glance into remote futurity, have prognoſticated a ſaturnian age, when every citizen ſhould be a philoſopher, and the univerſe one entire Rome ? But it is the error of men, who, preſuming to deſcribe at ſo vaſt an interval, imagine circumſtances and connexions which have

have no exiſtence; as it is often found that lands, which appeared united when obſerved remotely, are in reality eternally ſeparated by the ocean.

Among the moſt ſanguine, and the moſt ſingular of modern philoſophers, is the worthy Abbè de Saint Pierre. The honeſty of his heart exceeded the rectitude of his underſtanding. His project of "An Univerſal Peace," by the infelicity of his ſtyle, could find no readers; a philanthropiſt as ſingular, but more eloquent, the celebrated Rouſſeau, embelliſhed the neglected labour, enabled us to read the performance, and perceive it's humane imbecillity. It was no dull conception of a Dutch trader, who having inſcribed on his ſign the words "Perpe-" tual Peace," had painted under it, a church-yard. Our good Abbè had a notion that an age was not diſtant, when ſuch would be the progreſs of that maſs of light, which was daily

 gathering,

gathering, that it would influence every ſpecies of knowledge, and penetrate to the loweſt orders of ſociety. This future generation is to be remarkable for the force of it's reaſon, and the ſeverity of it's truth. It is therefore only to permit works of utility; to contemn the ornaments of eloquence, and the charms of poetry; but it may be neceſſary to obſerve, that our prophet was neither an orator, nor a poet. A literary anecdote is recorded, which at leaſt proves his firm perſuaſion of this future age; and perhaps he was one of the very few prophets who believed in their own predictions. He was once preſent at the recitation of one of thoſe works which are only valued for the graces of their compoſition, and the felicity of their manner. A performance of ſuch taſte would not therefore be read by the more reaſonable beings of his metaphyſical age. He appeared frigid and unmoved,

unmoved, while the audience was enraptured. His opinion was aſked; he ſmiled, and ſaid—"It is a thing which is YET thought to be fine!"

Another of theſe chimerical, yet grand ſpeculators, appears to me to have been the celebrated Leibnitz, who conceived the extravagant notion of forming one nation of all Europe; for he propoſed to reduce Europe under one temporal power, in the Emperor, and under one ſpiritual, in the Pope; and to conſtruct an univerſal philoſophical language. This great ſcholar is an example of the fatal attachment which a ſuperior mind may experience for a ſyſtem of which it is blindly enamoured, and to which it ſacrifices it's own ſenſations, and it's own convictions. Leibnitz was a genuine philoſopher, and a friend to humanity; his project of an univerſal language evinces this; but having once fixed on a ſyſtem, he yielded up

that deareſt intereſt to a philoſopher, the proſperity of the human mind; for what tyrant could have forged more permanent chains for intellectual freedom, than placing man under two ſuch powers? If this project had been poſſible to effect, the other of the philoſophical language had been uſeleſs; philoſophy then would not have been allowed a language.

He who thinks, will perceive in every enlightened nation, three kinds of people; an inconſiderable number inſtructed by reaſon, and glowing with humanity; a countleſs multitude, barbarous and ignorant, intolerant and inhoſpitable; and a vacillating people with ſome reaſon and humanity, but with great prejudices, at once the half-echoes of philoſophy, and the adherents of popular opinion. Can the *public* be denominated *enlightened?* Take an extenſive view among the various orders of ſociety, and obſerve how

how folly ſtill wantons in the vigour of youth, and prejudice ſtill ſtalks in the ſtubbornneſs of age.

To trace the human mind as it exiſts in a people, would be the only method to detect this fallacious expreſſion. The unenlightened numbers, who are totally uninfluenced by the few, live in a foul world of their own creation. The moral arithmetician, as he looks for the ſum total of the unenlightened public, muſt reſemble the algebraiſt, who riots in incalculable quantities, and who ſmiles at the ſimple ſavage, whoſe arithmetic extends not further than the number of three.

In a metropolis, we contemplate the human mind in all it's inflections. If we were to judge of men by the condition of their *minds,* (which perhaps is the moſt impartial manner of judging) we ſhould not conſult the year of their birth, to date their ages; and an intellectual regiſter might be

drawn up, on a totally different plan from our parochial ones. A perſon may, according to the vulgar era, be in the maturity of life, when by our philoſophical epocha he is born in the tenth century. That degree of mind which regulated the bigotry of a monk in the middle ages, may be diſcovered in a modern rector. An adventurous ſpirit in a red coat, who is almoſt as deſirous (to uſe the wit of South) to receive a kiſs from the mouth of a cannon, as from that of his miſtreſs, belongs to the age of chivalry, and if he ſhould compoſe verſes, and be magnificently prodigal, he is a gay and noble troubadour. A ſarcaſtic philoſopher, who inſtructs his fellow citizens, and retires from their ſociety, is a contemporary with Diogenes; and he who reforming the world, graces inſtruction with amenity, may be placed in the days of Plato. Our vulgar politicians muſt be arranged among the

the Roundheads and Olivers, and Tom Paine himſelf is ſo very ancient as to be a contemporary of Shimei. The reſult of our calculations would be, that the enlightened public form an inconſiderable number.

It muſt however be confeſſed, that what knowledge has been accumulated by modern philoſophy, cannot eaſily periſh; the art of printing has imparted ſtability to our intellectual ſtructures, in what depends on the mechanical preſervation. Human ſcience can no more be annihilated by an Omar. A ſingular ſpectacle has, therefore, been exhibited; and it is ſometimes urged by thoſe who contemplate, with pleaſing aſtoniſhment, the actual progreſs of the human mind, as a proof of the immutability of truth, that in the preſent day, every enlightened individual, whether he reſides at Paris, at Madrid, or at London, now thinks alike; no variation of climate, no re-

moteneſs of place, not even national prejudices, more variable and more remote than either, deſtroy that unanimity of opinion, which they feel on certain topics eſſential to human welfare.

This appears to be a ſpecious argument in favour of the enlightened public. But we ſhould recollect, that this unanimity of opinion, which ſo frequently excites ſurpriſe, is owing to their deriving their ideas from the ſame ſources; at Paris, at Madrid, and at London, the ſame authors are read, and, therefore, the ſame opinions are formed.

Thus we account for this unanimity of opinion; and we may now reaſonably enquire if *unanimity of opinion* always indicates *permanent truth?* It is certain that very extravagant opinions were once univerſally received; it becomes not an individual to affirm that ſome of our modern opinions are marvelloufly

vellouſly extravagant; we muſt leave them for the deciſion of poſterity. We may, however, ſay to the greateſt genius, look at what your equals have done, and obſerve how frequently they have erred. Reflect, that whenever an Ariſtotle, a Deſcartes, and a Newton appeared, they formed a new epocha in the annals of human knowledge; it is not unreaſonable to add one, among your thouſand conjectures, and ſay, that their future rivals may trace new connections, and collect new facts, which may tend to annihilate the ſyſtems of their predeceſſors. Is not opinion often local, and ever diſguiſed by cuſtom? is not what we call truth often error? and are not the paſſions and ideas of men of ſo very temporary a nature, that they ſcarce endure with their century? This enlightened public may diſcover that their notions become obſolete, and that with new ſyſtems of knowledge,

and

and new modes of exiſtence, their books may be cloſed for their ſucceſſors, and only conſulted by the curious of a future generation, as we now examine Ariſtotle and Deſcartes, Ariſtophanes and Chaucer. Our learning may no more be their learning, than our faſhions will be their faſhions. Every thing in this world is faſhion.

It may alſo be conjectured, that amidſt the multitude of future diſcoveries, the original authors of our own age, the Newtons and the Lockes, may have their conceptions become ſo long familiariſed, as to be incorporated with the novel diſcoveries, as truths ſo inconteſtible, that very few ſhall even be acquainted with their firſt diſcoverers. It would therefore appear, that the juſtneſs, as well as the extravagance of our authors, are alike inimical to their future celebrity.

But this inſtability never attends the noble exertions of virtue. Whoever

chuſes

chuſes to immortaliſe his name, by an action of patriotiſm, or of philanthropy, will meet the certain admiration of poſterity. To render a ſervice to another is in the power of the meaneſt individual; but to aggrandiſe the gentle affections into ſublime paſſions, to riſe from the ſocial circle to the public weal, to extend our ordinary life through years of glory, is performing that which once raiſed men into demi-gods; but which, in the preſent age, would not only find little imitation, but much ridicule. Do I not uſe a very ridiculous expreſſion, when I deſire, that "the Enlightened Public" may be worthy of the title of "the Virtuous Public?"

Of Licensers of the Press.

In the hiſtory of human oppreſſion, a prominent event will be that of the employing of a vigilant centinel on the thoughts, as well as on the bodies of authors. The inſtitution of Licenſers of the Preſs, or Cenſors of Books, was the laſt hope of deſpairing bigotry; and not only, for a conſiderable time, retarded the acceleration of philoſophy, but may be ſaid to have effected a temporary annihilation; for what author has ſo little vanity as to write what muſt be refuſed the honours of publication?

Had not ſeveral accidental circumſtances eſtabliſhed the freedom of the preſs, it might be difficult, by a retrograde calculation, to fix on that low degree, at which, to the preſent moment,

ment, popular opinion, with a ſomniferous ſtability, had reſted. Europe had now been more barbarous than in her cloudieſt ages; for the preſs had become an inſtrument, not to reſtrain, but to extend; not to undermine, but to prop; not to wreſtle with, but to cheriſh thoſe inhuman prejudices which were once dignified by the holy titles of Religion and Politics. A Locke and a Monteſquieu had never exiſted for the world, and at this day we ſhould have admired, like our predeceſſors, the ſubtilties of an Aquinas, and the doctrines of a Filmer. Our ideas had been fabricated in an inquiſitorial forge, and though they would not have conſiſted of a variety of forms, they would not have wanted that heat which might have given durability.

The Inquiſitors having long examined and deprecated a vaſt multitude of publications, which the freedom of foreign

foreign preſſes allowed, and their critical occupations after the revolution of Luther, becoming greater and more important at every hour, they were deſirous of aſſiſting thoſe of their numerous adherents, who were fearful of employing their own eyes, and truſting to their own ſenſations, by preſerving them in their antiquated cecity. It was now they invented the ſcheme of printing catalogues of prohibited books, which they called Expurgatory Indexes. Almoſt every new work augmented theſe voluminous catalogues; and, perhaps, in ſome reſpect, they invited readers to publications which might not otherwiſe have attracted notice. It is curious to reflect on the uſe which the two parties made of them; for while the pious catholic croſſed himſelf at every title, and frequently breathed an oriſon for the eternal damnation of the authors, the Heretics on the contrary would

would purchaſe no book which had not been inſerted in theſe indexes. The Heretic had certainly a finer taſte, and a more lively entertainment in reading, than the pious catholic; for the moſt animated and the moſt valuable authors, have found their way into theſe indexes. Nothing then, but orthodoxical dullneſs, was exempt from cenſure. Among the cruel abſurdities of that day, is an edict from the French King, to forbid the unfortunate profeſſor Ramus the reading of his own works, and which, ſo very frequently, is the only real pleaſure ſome writers receive from their labours.

The venerable authors of theſe indexes, long, indeed, had reaſon to ſuppoſe, that a ſubmiſſive credulity was attached to the human character; and, therefore, they conſidered that the publications of their adverſaries required no other anſwer, than an in-

ſertion in their indexes. Literary controverſy was threatened to be eternally annihilated, by this conciſe and commodious mode. They multiplied editions throughout Europe; but the Heretics as induſtriouſly reprinted them with ample prefaces, and uſeful annotations. In our country, Dr. James, of Oxford, republiſhed an index, with proper animadverſions. One of their portions included, a liſt of thoſe Heretics whoſe heads were condemned as well as their works. It is curious to obſerve, that as theſe indexes were formed in different countries, the opinions were diametrically oppoſite to each other; the examiners in Italy, under the title of the Council of Trent, prohibited what thoſe in the Netherlands admitted; and ſome inquiſitors, who complained of the partial conduct of theſe catalogues, were, in their turn, placed by the confraternity in their indexes; retaliation ſucceeded

retaliation.

retaliation. To the preſent moment ſuch indexes are formed in Spain, and at Rome, where, in theſe archives of the dotage of bigotry, may be read, the names of every modern philoſopher who has written to the preſent hour.

When theſe inſertions were found of no other uſe, than to diſperſe the criminal volumes, the eccleſiaſtical arm was employed in burning them in public places; and among ſeveral anecdotes of ſending authors to the flames before their time, Monnoie diſcovered in one of theſe ſepulchral fires, that an edition of Joſephus had been burnt, not, ſays he, becauſe the ancient author was a jew, but that the tranſlator was a janſeniſt. Theſe literary conflagrations ſerved the purpoſes of bookſellers; and the publiſher of Eraſmus's Colloquies intrigued for the burning of the work, on purpoſe to raiſe the ſale; and he ſold 24,000.

The curioſity of man is raiſed by difficulties, and it is with the freedom of the mind, as with that herb, which the more it is trodden on, grows the more vigorouſly.

The fancy of the poet, and the veracity of the hiſtorian, were alike amputated, by cenſors of books; a ſimile, or even an epithet, might ſend the immortal bard to the galleys, and as for the diſcernment and freedom to be expected in an hiſtorian, whoſe genius was firſt to be cloſeted with ſuch an examiner, we may form an idea, by quoting the uſual expreſſion in the privileges. In Nani's Hiſtory of Venice, it is allowed to be printed, becauſe it contained *nothing againſt princes*. This mode of approbation ſhews either that princes were immaculate, or hiſtorians were ignorant or falſe. A book in Spain paſſes through ſix courts before it can be publiſhed; and in Portugal, it is ſaid, through ſeven. A book in thoſe

thoſe countries is ſuppoſed to recommend itſelf to the reader, by the information that it is publiſhed with *all* the neceſſary privileges. The works of Locke and Monteſquieu, Voltaire and Rouſſeau, &c. are at the preſent moment prohibited throughout Italy, and, I believe, in every catholic country; the favourite authors of Europe, muſt be obtained by ſecrecy, and read in concealment.

Our literary hiſtory has been ſo little perpetuated, either by tradition, or by record, that there are few individual topics which can be purſued through a concatenation of events. We glean facts in the ſcattered notices of foreign literature; but when we come to our own country, we find that a taſte for this pleaſing ſpecies of erudition, has never been much cultivated, though there have been periods which muſt have afforded ample materials. Johnſon, who loved as much as the great

Leibnitz, the events of literature, has commenced his lives of the poets, with a complaint of "the penury of Engliſh biography." Our authors have groaned under the leaden arm of Licenſers of the Preſs, and no doubt many intereſting facts have periſhed, which would have inſtructed the preſent generation. I ſhall ever preſerve, with a religious care, one durable mark of that tyranny which once fixed it's talons on the Engliſh preſs. The Poems of Lord Brooke, if they cannot delight, accidentally inſtruct poſterity in the value of freedom of thinking. In this book one is ſurpriſed at finding twenty of it's firſt pages deficient. Mr. Malone, by an entry in the MSS. of the Maſter of the Revels, has diſcovered that theſe pages contained a poem on religion, which was cancelled by the order of Archbiſhop Laud, who probably conſidered that religion

ligion could not be ſecure in the hands of any one but an Archbiſhop.

The ignorance and ſtupidity of theſe cenſors, became as remarkable as their exterminating ſpirit. The noble ſimile of Milton, of Satan with the riſing-ſun, in the firſt book of the Paradiſe Loſt, we happen to know, had almoſt occaſioned the ſuppreſſion of that immortal epic. It was ſuppoſed to contain treaſon. The French have retained many curious facts of the ſingular ineptitude of theſe cenſors. Mallebranche ſaid, that he could never obtain an approbation for his Reſearch after Truth, becauſe it was unintelligible to his cenſors; and at length Mezeray, the hiſtorian, approved of it as a book of geometry. Latterly in France, it is ſaid, that the greateſt geniuſes were obliged to ſubmit their works to the critical underſtanding of perſons who had formerly been low dependants on ſome man of quality,

and who appear to have brought the ſame ſervility of mind to the examination of works of genius. There is ſomething, which, on the principles of incongruity and contraſt, becomes exquiſitely ludicrous, in obſerving the works of ſuch writers as Voltaire, d'Alembert, Marmontel, and Raynal, allowed to be printed, and even commended, by certain perſons, who had never printed any thing themſelves but their names. One of theſe gentlemen ſuppreſſed a work becauſe it contained principles of government, which appeared to him not conformable to the laws of Moſes. Another ſaid to a geometrician, "I cannot permit the publication of your book; you dare to ſay, that between two given points, the ſhorteſt line is the ſtraight line. Do you think me ſuch an idiot as not to perceive your alluſion? If your work appeared, I ſhould make enemies of all thoſe who find, by crooked ways,

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an eaſier admittance into court, than by a ſtraight line. Conſider their number!"—I cannot vouch for the above anecdote; but I have heard, that one of theſe cenſors eraſed from a comedy of Beaumarchais, the aſſeveration *ma foi*, and inſtituted in it's place, *morbleu*; becauſe, obſerved the profound critic, religion is leſs offended by this word than by the other. Theſe appear trifling minutiæ; and yet, like a hair in a watch, that utterly deſtroys it's progreſs, theſe little ineptiæ obliged writers to have recourſe to foreign preſſes; compelled a Monteſquieu to write with a concealed ambiguity of phraſe, and Helvetius to ſign a retractation of his principles, which, adjoined to his celebrated work, L'Eſprit, is at once an evidence which marks not leſs diſhonour on timid philoſophy, than on arrogant bigotry.

With the revolution, ceaſed, in England, the licences for the preſs; but

but it's liberty did not commence till 1694, when every reſtraint was taken off, by the firm and deciſive tone of the Commons. It was granted, ſays our philoſophic Hume, " to the great diſpleaſure of the King and his Miniſters, who, ſeeing no where, in any government during preſent or paſt ages, any example of ſuch unlimited freedom, doubted much of it's ſalutary effects, and probably thought, that no books or writings would ever ſo much improve the general underſtanding of men, as to render it ſafe to entruſt them with an indulgence ſo eaſily abuſed."

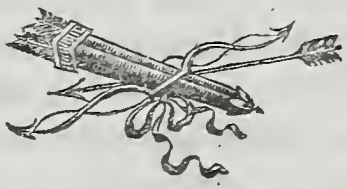
And the preſent moment verifies the preſcient conjecture of the philoſopher. Such, indeed, is the exiſting licentiouſneſs of our preſs, that ſome, not perhaps the moſt hoſtile to the cauſe of freedom, would not be averſe to manacle authors once more with an IMPRIMATUR. It may be honeſtly urged

urged, that the worſt abuſe of the preſs, is more tolerable than would be ſuch a violation of national liberty; but this is certain, that it is not any more in the power of a deſpotic Miniſter to annihilate this freedom; becauſe if the great inſtructors of mankind could find no other redreſs againſt the capricious tyranny of an Imprimatur, they would fly to foreign preſſes, and it would then happen, that England, which firſt diffuſed a ſpirit of true freedom in Europe, would be neceſſitated to receive it from thoſe very nations on whom ſhe had beſtowed it. The profound Hume has declared, that "THE LIBERTY OF BRITAIN IS GONE FOR EVER when ſuch attempts ſhall ſucceed." But I venture to aſſert, that this Liberty may become a beloved exile, but never an abdicated monarch; baniſh her from Britain, but while there exiſts an open preſs in America, and even among our cruel

rivals

rivals the French, ſhe will be reverenced at a diſtance, and will, at ſome future day, be received again on her natal ſhores, as our natural ſovereign.

A virtuous monarch, like a virtuous author, will conſider the freedom of the preſs as the organ of his people's felicity; for by that organ alone can the voice of truth reſound to his throne. He will reſpect the language of the philoſopher; and he will leave calumniators to the fate of all calumny; a fate ſimilar to thoſe, who having overcharged their arms, with the felleſt intentions, find, that the death they intended for others, only in burſting, annihilates themſelves.



On Reading.

SINCE writing is juſtly denominated an art, I think that reading claims the ſame diſtinction. To adorn ideas with elegance, is an act of the mind, ſuperior to that of receiving them, and is the province of genius; but to receive them with a happy diſcrimination, is a taſk not leſs uſeful, and can only be the effect of a juſt taſte.

Yet it will be found that a juſt taſte is not ſufficient to obtain the proper end of reading. Two perſons of equal taſte riſe from the peruſal of the ſame book with very different notions; the one will not only have the ideas of the author at command, and ſtrongly imbibe his manner, but will have enriched his own mind by a new acceſſion of matter, and find a new train of

of ſentiment awakened and in action. The other quits his author in a pleaſing diſtraction, but of the pleaſures of reading, nothing remains but a tumultuous ſenſation. He has only delighted himſelf with the brilliant colouring, and the mingled ſhadows of a variety of objects, while the other receives the impreſſion not only of the colours and the ſhades, but the diſtinct grace, and the accurate forms of the objects.

To account for theſe different effects, we muſt have recourſe to a logical diſtinction, which appears to reveal one of the great myſteries in the art of reading. Logicians diſtinguiſh between perceptions and ideas. Perception is that faculty of the mind which notices the ſimple impreſſion of objects; but when theſe objects exiſt in the mind, and are there treaſured and arranged as materials for reflection, then they are called ideas. A perception

tion is like a tranſient ſun-beam, which juſt ſhews the object, but leaves neither light nor warmth; while an idea is like the fervid beam of noon, which throws a ſettled and powerful light.

Many ingenious readers complain that their memory is defective, and their ſtudies unfruitful. This defect, however, ariſes from their indulging the facile pleaſures of perceptions, to the laborious habit of forming them into ideas. We muſt not deceive ourſelves. Perceptions require only the ſenſibility of taſte, and their pleaſures are continuous, eaſy, and exquiſite. Ideas not only require the ſame power of taſte, but an art of combination, and an exertion of the reaſoning powers, which form no mean operation of the mind. Ideas are therefore labours; and for thoſe who will not undergo the fatigue of labour, it is unjuſt to complain, if they come from the harveſt with ſcarce a ſheaf in their hands.

The

The numerous claſs of readers of taſte, who only prefer a book to the odd trick at whiſt, have, therefore, no reaſon to murmur, if that which is only taken up as an amuſement, ſhould terminate like all amuſements, in temporary pleaſure. To be wiſer and better, is rarely the intention of the gay and the frivolous; the complaints of the gay and the frivolous, are nothing but a new manner of diſplaying gaiety and frivolity; they are lamentations full of mirth.

There are ſecrets in the art of reading, which tend to facilitate its purpoſes, by aſſiſting the memory, and augmenting intellectual opulence. Some, our own ingenuity muſt form, and perhaps every ſtudent, has an artificial manner of recollection, and a peculiar arrangement; as, in ſhort hand, almoſt every writer has a ſyſtem of his own. There are, however, ſome regulations which appear of general utility,

utility, and the few, my own obſervations have produced, I ſhall venture to communicate.

It is an obſervation of the elder Pliny, (who, having been a voluminous compiler, muſt have had great experience in the art of reading) that there was no book ſo bad, but which contained ſomething good. It is neceſſary, however, to obſerve, that juſt and obvious as this reading axiom may appear, it requires a commentary to be underſtood. To read every book would be fatal to the intereſt of moſt readers; they who only ſeek in ſtudy for mere pleaſure, would be continually diſappointed; for the obſervation is only adapted to that phlegmatic perſeverance which ſeems to find pleaſure in mere ſtudy. He who only ſeeks for information, muſt be contented to pick it up in obſcure paths, to mount rugged rocks for a few flowers, and to paſs many days bewildered

in dark foreſts, and wild deſerts. The reader of erudition may therefore read every book. But he who only deſires to gratify a more delicate ſenſation, who would only fill his heart with delicious ſentiment, and his fancy with bright imagery, in a word, the reader of taſte muſt be contented to range in more contracted limits, and to reſtrict himſelf to the paths of cultured pleaſure grounds. Without this diſtinction in reading, ſtudy becomes a labour painful and interminable; and hence readers of taſte complain that there is no term to reading, and readers of erudition that books contain nothing but phraſes. When the former confine themſelves to works of taſte, their complaints ceaſe, and when the latter keep to books of facts, they fix on the proper aliment for their inſatiable curioſity.

Nor is it always neceſſary, in the purſuits of learning, to read every book

book entire. Perhaps this taſk has now become an impoſſibility, notwithſtanding thoſe oſtentatious erudits, who, by their infinite and exact quotations, appear to have read and digeſted every thing; readers, artleſs and honeſt, have conceived from ſuch writers, an illuſive idea of the power and extenſiveneſs of the human faculties. Of many books it is ſufficient to ſeiſe the plan, and to examine ſome of it's portions. The quackery of the learned, has been often expoſed; and the art of quoting fifty books in a morning, is a taſk neither difficult nor tedious. There is a little ſupplement placed at the cloſe of every volume, of which few readers conceive the utility; but ſome of the moſt eminent writers in Europe, have been great adepts in the art of index-reading. An index-reader is, indeed, more let into the ſecrets of an author, than the other who attends him with all the tedious forms

of ceremony; as thoſe Courtiers who pay their public devoirs at court, are leſs familiar with the Miniſter, than the few who merely enter the chamber of audience, and who generally ſteal up the back ſtairs, and hold their ſecret conſultations with the Miniſter himſelf. I, for my part, venerate the inventor of indexes; and I know not to whom to yield the preference, either to Hippocrates, who was the firſt great anatomiſer of the human body, or to that unknown labourer in literature, who firſt laid open the nerves and arteries of a book.

It may be unneceſſary alſo, to read all the works of an author, but only to attach ourſelves to thoſe which have received the approbation of poſterity. By this ſcheme we become acquainted with the fineſt compoſitions in half the time thoſe employ, who, attempting to read every thing, are often little acquainted with, and even ignorant of the

the moſt intereſting performances. Thus of Machiavel, it may be ſufficient to read his Prince and his Hiſtory of Florence; of Milton nearly all his Poetry, little of his Proſe, and nothing of his Hiſtory; of Fielding's twelve volumes, ſix may be ſufficient; and of Voltaire's ninety, perhaps thirty may ſatisfy. Of Lord Cheſterfield's Letters, the third volume is the eſſential one, and concentrates the whole ſyſtem. A reader is too often a priſoner attached to the triumphal car of an author of great celebrity, and when he ventures not to judge for himſelf, conceives, while he is reading the indifferent works of great authors, that the languor which he experiences, ariſes from his own defective taſte. But the beſt writers, when they are voluminous, have a great deal of mediocrity; for whenever an author attains to a facility in compoſition, the ſucceſs of his preceding labours, not

only ſtimulate him to new performances, but prejudice the public in their favour; and it is often no ſhort period before the public, or the author, are ſenſible of the mediocrity of the performances.

On the other ſide, readers muſt not imagine that all the pleaſures of compoſition depend on the author; for there is ſomething which a reader himſelf muſt bring to the book, that the book may pleaſe. There is a literary appetite which the author can no more impart, than the moſt ſkilful cook can give an appetency to the gueſts. When Cardinal Richelieu ſaid to Godeau, that he did not underſtand his verſes, the honeſt poet replied, that it was not his fault. It would indeed be very unreaſonable, when a painter exhibits his pictures in public, to expect that he ſhould provide ſpectacles for the uſe of the ſhort-ſighted. Every man muſt come prepared as well as he can.

can. Simonides confeſſed himſelf incapable of deceiving ſtupid perſons; and Balzac remarked of the girls of his village, that they were too ſilly to be deceived by a man of wit. Dullneſs is impenetrable; and there are hours when the livelieſt taſte loſes it's ſenſibility. The temporary tone of the mind may be unfavourable to taſte a work properly, and we have had many erroneous criticiſms from great men, which may often be attributed to this circumſtance. The mind communicates it's infirm diſpoſitions to the book, and an author has not only his own defects to account for, but alſo thoſe of his reader. There is ſomething in compoſition, like the game of ſhuttlecock, where, if the reader does not quickly rebound the feathered cork, to the author, the game is deſtroyed, and the whole ſpirit of the work falls extinct.

A frequent impediment in reading, is a diſinclination in the mind, to ſettle on the ſubject; agitated by incongruous and diſſimilar ideas, it is with pain that we admit thoſe of the author. But it is certain, that if we once apply ourſelves, with a gentle violence, to the peruſal of an intereſting work, the mind ſoon aſſimilates the ſubject; the diſinclination is no more, and like Homer's chariot wheels, we kindle as we roll. The ancient Rabbins, who paſſed their days in their madraſſes or ſchools, and who certainly were great readers of their moſt voluminous Talmud, adviſed their young ſtudents to apply themſelves to their readings, whether they felt an inclination or not, becauſe, as they proceeded, they would find their diſpoſition reſtored, and their curioſity awakened. Philoſophy can eaſily account for this fact; it is ſo certain, and acts with ſuch power, that even indifferent works are frequently

frequently finiſhed, merely to gratify that curioſity which it's early pages have communicated. The ravenous appetite of Johnſon for reading, is expreſſed in a ſtrong metaphor, by Mrs. Knowles, who ſaid, "he knows how to read better than any one; he gets at the ſubſtance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it."

We ſhould heſitate to pronounce on a work of ſome merit, on the firſt peruſal, for that is rarely attended by a proper reliſh. It is with reading as with wine; for connoiſſeurs have obſerved, that the firſt glaſs is inſufficient to decide on it's quality; it is neceſſary to imbue the palate, to give it that racineſs of reliſh, which communicates every latent quality, and enables us to judge as keenly as the two uncles of Sancho.

There are ſome mechanical aids in reading, which may prove of great utility, and form a kind of rejuvenef-

cene

cene of our early ſtudies. Montaigne placed at the end of thoſe books which he intended not to reperuſe, the time he had read it, with a conciſe deciſion on it's merits; that, ſays he, it may thus repreſent to me, the air and general idea I had conceived of the author, in reading the work. He has obliged his admirers with giving ſeveral of theſe annotations. Of Young the poet, it is noticed, that whenever he came to a ſtriking paſſage, he folded the leaf; and that at his death, books have been found in his library, which had long reſiſted the power of cloſing. A mode more eaſy than uſeful; for after a length of time, they muſt be again read to know why they were folded. This difficulty is obviated by thoſe, who note in a blank leaf, the pages to be referred to, with a word of criticiſm. Nor let us conſider theſe minute directions as unworthy the moſt enlarged minds; by theſe petty exertions

exertions at the moſt diſtant periods, may learning obtain it's authorities, and fancy combine it's ideas. Seneca, in ſending ſome volumes to his friend Lucillius, accompanies them with notes of particular paſſages that, he obſerves, you who only aim at the uſeful, may be ſpared the trouble of examining them entire. I have ſeen books noted by Voltaire with a word of cenſure or approbation on the page itſelf, which was his uſual practice; and theſe volumes are precious to every man of taſte. Somebody complained that the books he lent Voltaire were returned always disfigured by his remarks; but he was a true German writer of the old claſs.

A profeſſional ſtudent ſhould divide his readings into an *uniform* reading which is uſeful, and into a *diverſified* reading which is pleaſant. Guy Patin, an eminent phyſician and man of letters, had a juſt notion of this manner;

and

and I ſhall quote his words. He ſays, "I daily read Hippocrates, Galen, Fernel, and other illuſtrious maſters of my profeſſion; this I call my profitable readings. I frequently read Ovid, Juvenal, Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, and others, and theſe are my recreations." We muſt obſerve theſe diſtinctions, for it frequently happens that a lawyer or a phyſician, with great induſtry and love of ſtudy, by giving too much into his diverſified readings, may utterly neglect what ſhould be his uniform ſtudies.

An author is often cruelly mortified to find his work repoſing on a harpſichord or a table, with it's virgin pages. Among the mortifications of the elegant Mickle, was this, that the lord to whom he had dedicated his verſion of the Luſiad, had long the epic in his poſſeſſion, in the ſtate he had received it. How often alſo are authors mortified to perceive, that generally the firſt volume of their work

work is ever fouler than it's brother! It is, therefore, an advantage to compoſe in ſingle volumes; for then they flatter themſelves, a ſecond would be acceptable; but moſt books are more read for curioſity, than for pleaſure; and are often looked into, but rarely reſumed. Authors are vain, but readers are capricious.

Readers may be claſſed into an infinite number of diviſions; but an author is a ſolitary being, who, for the ſame reaſon he pleaſes one, muſt conſequently diſpleaſe another. To have too exalted a genius, is more prejudicial for his celebrity, than to have a moderate one; for we ſhall find that the moſt popular works, are not of the higheſt value, but of the greateſt uſefulneſs. I could mention ſome eſteemed writers, whoſe works have attained to a great number of editions, but whoſe minds were never yet inflamed by an accidental fervour of original

ginal genius. They inſtruct thoſe who require inſtruction, and they pleaſe thoſe, who are yet ſufficiently ignorant to diſcover a novelty in their ſtrictures; in a word they form taſte, rather than impart genius. A Carlo Marat, is a Raphael to thoſe who have not ſtudied a Raphael. They may apply to themſelves the ſame obſervation Lucilius, the ſatiriſt, has made, that he did not write for Perſius, for Scipio, and for Rutilius, perſons eminent for their ſcience, but for the Tarentines, the Conſentines, and the Sicilians. Montaigne has complained that he found his readers too learned, or too ignorant, and that he could only pleaſe a middle claſs, who have juſt learning enough to comprehend him. Congreve ſays, "there is in true beauty, ſomething which vulgar ſouls cannot admire." And, we may add, there is ſomething in exquiſite compoſition, which ordinary readers can never underſtand.

Some

Some will only read old books, as if there were no valuable truths to be diſcovered in modern publications, while others will only read new books, as if ſome valuable truths are not among the old. Some will not read a book, becauſe they are acquainted with the author; by which the reader may be more injured than the author; others not only read the book, but would alſo read the man; by which the moſt ingenious author may be injured by the moſt impertinent reader.

On Poetical Expression.

ONE of the grand diſtinctions of poetry conſiſts in a peculiarity of phraſe, and novelty of expreſſion; for no mechanical arrangements, not even ſentiment or imagery, (for proſe can retain all theſe qualities) can form the eſſential diſtinction between verſe and and proſe. The genuine diction of poetry is totally diſtinct from proſaic compoſition, and the charm ariſes from it's being removed from familiar language. From this eſtabliſhed and acknowledged principle may be deduced the following facts.

Hence may be accounted the extreme delight found in the ancient claſſics, which, with ſome, has ariſen to ſuch an extravagance. A judicious critic will allow, that a paſſage in Pope,

Pope, may rival one in Virgil; and it might happen, that the modern excelled the ancient parallel. But the pleaſure may not be equal in the modern as in the ancient; nor is this the mere effect of an artificial ſenſation acquired at the univerſity, but on the contrary it is a natural emotion. The ancient enjoys the peculiar felicity of employing a diction, which to us muſt be immaculate; a magnificence of ſound, and a novelty of combination, raiſe it to their language of the gods; we are offended by no feebleneſs of terms, and no familiarity of expreſſion. And if the fancy of the Latin ſhould fall, a turn of diction, which might have been but common, and in the poſſeſſion of the moſt ordinary verſifier in the days of Virgil, will ſupport it; and it is thus that ideas which would excite no attention in a modern, may charm in an ancient. Hence too, modern poets, who write Engliſh verſe, with-

out genius or taſte, have often compoſed in Latin with ſome powers. We no doubt diſcover a hundred beauties in Horace and Virgil, which could not have been ſuch to their contemporaries, becauſe the language was not ſufficiently remote from them. I ſhall give two very poetical expreſſions in Virgil, which I now recollect, and he has many ſimilar ones. Theſe felicitous expreſſions, full of the true ſpirit of poetry, were probably no novelties when he wrote them. The poet ſays, "*Dum trepidant* ALÆ" and "SONIPES," where, in the firſt, *wings* are underſtood for *birds*, and in the ſecond, *ſounding-feet* for *horſes*. The effect for the cauſe. An Engliſh poet, to deſcribe birds, has no novelty of term; three or four expreſſions offend by their frequent recurrence; and the mean ſound of the noun itſelf diminiſhes the beauty of many a fine poetical paſſage, by making it wear a proſaic appearance.

ance. Our modern poets have not invented a poetical term for one of their moſt favourite objects. Dryden in verſifying the celebrated ſimile of Virgil's Nightingale, has happily called the young, "the unfeathered innocence."

Virgil has alſo, in his Georgics, an expreſſion ſo truely inimitable, that our language appears not to afford a correſpondent delicacy, and exact tint of phraſe. When the poet deſcribes Eurydice, at the moment before ſhe is wounded by the ſnake concealed in the graſs, as if animated by a preſcient fervour, he exclaims—"*moritura puella*" The reader of taſte feels an emotion of ſurpriſe and curioſity. Tranſlate this happy word literally into proſe, and the grace muſt be as fugitive as Eurydice herſelf, "the maid about to die." The charm ariſes, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, from the conciſe amplitude of idea, the ſingle word conveys. All

our tranſlators have failed in catching the evaneſcent beauty.

" The dying bride." *Dryden.*

" She doomed to death." *Trapp.*

" The fated maid." *Warton.*

In none of theſe is a ſimilar emotion raiſed in the mind of the reader, which he receives from the " Moritura." Dryden's, indeed, is ſingularly exceptionable, and Warton's the happieſt; yet " fated" is a general idea, and loſes that delicate ſhade of appropriation, of the " about to die."

In an inferior degree, we may extend our principle to modern languages; for, to me, it has often appeared, that a paſſage from Taſſo, has given to an Engliſh reader, a pleaſure which a native cannot experience; the pleaſure ariſing from a language whoſe graces have not become familiar by ordinary recurrence.

I conceive that the effect of the ſame principle may be traced in our own earlier writers. One of their peculiar charms is their ancient ſtyle; and certain phraſes, which are generally underſtood, delight, like a painting which is juſt embrowned and mellowed by the hand of time. If we contraſt a fine paſſage in Shakeſpeare, with a rival one in a modern poet, allowing them an equal force, we ſhould not heſitate to give the preference to the elder bard. The lively pleaſure with which ſome men of taſte read Chaucer, may be aſcribed to their ſenſibility of a language, which diſplays many graces, inveſted with that novelty of poetical expreſſion, which would ceaſe to ſtrike were they familiar.

Hence we may deduce a curious fact; that one of the moſt difficult branches in modern poetry, or in the poetical art, in all ages of refinement, is, the formation of a new ſtyle, or

poetical diction. This demands not only a ſuperior genius, but a ſuſpicion may ariſe that our language in this reſpect is nearly exhauſted. And this will appear, if we examine the fineſt compoſitions publiſhed within the laſt thirty years; where one eminent defect will often be prevalent; that the general caſt of the language has little variations; expreſſions are interwoven, which the poet nicely picked out of the performances of his predeceſſors, to embroider his own; and though, ſometimes, a new combination of ideas, or a felicity of ſubject, render a poem intereſting, yet the poetical treaſury of diction receives but few acceſſions.

That this has been an effect felt by poets, who are not apt to inveſtigate cauſes, appears by the following obſervations and facts.

Milton, whoſe notions of poetry were of the moſt exalted nature, when he propoſed compoſing an epic, perceived

ceived the neceſſity of conſtructing a new diction, or as himſelf expreſſes it,

"To build the lofty rime."

In his ſmaller productions he was ſatisfied to employ the language of his contemporaries, becauſe in a ſhort compoſition he might form new combinations of ſtyle, without purſuing any particular ſyſtem. What, therefore, has this great poet attempted? An introduction of all the happieſt idioms of every language with which his extenſive learning was acquainted. Hebraiſms and Greciſms, Latiniſms and Italianiſms, poured themſelves to his copious mind; and what Johnſon has termed "the pedantry of his ſtyle," true taſte will, perhaps, acknowledge as an attempt to ſeiſe on thoſe felicitous expreſſions which more nicely reveal our ſenſations, bring the object cloſer to the eye of imagination, and which light and ſhade nature in her variety of hues. Dryden adorned his

language alſo by many Latiniſms; and Pope is acknowledged to have formed a diction, which in his day had all the attractions of novelty. Of all our poets, Gray had the livelieſt ſenſibility for this beauty, which he has expreſſed by "words that burn." It has ever appeared ſingular, that a poet of his ability has ſtudied ſo much, and produced ſo little. It is not improbable that he could not ſatisfy his own delicacy of taſte, in the creation of a new poetical diction; and this, I think, appears by thoſe few exquiſite performances he has left, which, like moſaic pavements, are richly inlaid, and moſt vividly painted, but are not the virgin veins of native marble from the quarry. Scarce an expreſſion in the poetry of Gray but appears to have been imitated or borrowed from his predeceſſors. What he has given evinces his aim; and we may conclude that it is one of the grand characteriſtics of modern

dern poetry, and one of the greateſt obſtacles in that pleaſing art.

Another obſervation may confirm this principle. Whenever, in the progreſs of refinement, the poetical language becomes thus difficult, it is obſervable that true genius, often weary with imitatively echoing the eſtabliſhed diction, at once falls back into the manner of the earlier poets. Some expreſſions of our elder writers have a marvellous effect in modern verſe, when the writer appears to give them not with verbal affectation, but ſpontaneous felicity. It has been thus in France, where the poet Rouſſeau has in many of his compoſitions eſſayed to ſeize on the naiveté of Marot, by copying his ſtyle, but his ſtrained affectation produces a diſagreeable effect. Churchill rejected an artificial diction, and too often verſifies like Oldham; for an editor of this poet's works has contraſted paſſages from the modern ſatiriſt,

ſatiriſt, which equal the diſcordance of Oldham's verſe. When Churchill introduces a poetical expreſſion from our elder poets, it has often a very pleaſing effect. Mr. Cooper, and his imitators, can only be conſidered as having aſſumed the diction and the manner of our old poets; a critical feeling perceives, in their blank verſe, the tones of Shakeſpeare. The ſtyle of a living poet in his ſatires, is the preciſe manner of ſome of our old poets; and in his delicate minor poems, where a poetical diction was unavoidable, we diſcover few novel combinations of expreſſion; their excellence conſiſting in the ſimplicity and tenderneſs of the ideas.

It has been conſidered as a poetical beauty to aggrandiſe the minute by the pomp of expreſſion. When objects, or circumſtances, by their exility or meanneſs, would occaſion no agreeable ſenſation, ſome have thought it

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an evidence of higher art, to dignify them by the grandeur of the ſtyle; in a word, as I heard a man of genius ſay of a painter, "he knew to give dignity to a dunghill." But this has often been carried to exceſs, by a faſtidious refinement. Boileau has been applauded (becauſe he firſt applauded himſelf, which is a certain way of ſecuring the approbation of many) for having raiſed into poetical language, the ſimple idea of his wearing a wig at the age of fifty eight. The lines are thus,

"Mais adjourdhui, qu'enfin la vielleſſe eſt venue,
Sous mes faux cheveux blonds deja toute chenue,
A jetté ſur ma tête, avec ſes doigts peſans,
Onze luſtres complets, ſurchargés de trois ans."

To me there appears a puerility in theſe celebrated lines, notwithſtanding the age of the venerable ſatiriſt; the deſcription is exact, and the expreſſion beautiful; but the poet debaſes his art, for when the reader recollects the

the *wig*, muſt he not ſmile at this mock ſublime? A pompous inanity which Velleius Paterculus employs, relative to a petty precaution made uſe of by Ceſar, is a remarkable inſtance of difficulty of expreſſion. When this great man was taken by the pirates, he lived among them like their conqueror, rather than their priſoner. The hiſtorian then proceeds in theſe words. "*Neque unquam aut nocte, aut die (cur enim quod vel maximum eſt, ſi narrari verbus ſpecioſis non poteſt, omittatur?) aut excalcearetur, aut diſcingeretur.*" Which may be thus tranſlated—Nor even by night, nor by day, (for ſhould I ſilently omit a circumſtance becauſe not expreſſible in ſplendid terms) he quitted—his gown and ſlippers—Is not the affectation of the writer ſenſible? But this quotation may ſerve to inforce the ſubject of this eſſay; for to me it appears that the ſonorous Latin terms of *excalcearetur* and *diſcingeretur* take much

much from the familiarity of the expreſſion. This tumid paſſage muſt have been more ſhocking to a man of taſte, in the days of Paterculus, than it is now.

To proſaic compoſition we may alſo extend our principle. Purity of language is not a characteriſtic of ſtyle, in an age of refinement. The great writers will ſolicitouſly domiciliate the moſt elegant foreign idioms, and hence the latiniſms of Johnſon, and the galliciſms of Gibbon. The more exquiſite our taſte, the more deſirous we are of expreſſing it's exquiſiteneſs; no writer complains of paucity of expreſſion in the firſt progreſs of taſte; for it is long before we are aware of the difficulty of giving the delicacies of conception, and communicating the preciſe quantity of our feelings. A refined writer is willing to loſe ſomething of idiomatic language, to gain ſomething of expreſſive language.

Some

Some of our fineſt idioms become common; and a writer then attempts to give an equivalent in ſenſe, that may not offend by it's commonneſs; and this attempt, perhaps, may riſe into affectation. The more poliſhed a language becomes, certain ſignificant expreſſions become obſolete; and this has been a complaint of ſome writers who were more ſolicitous of forcible, than of elegant expreſſion. We are not to be cenſured too ſeverely for an occaſional adoption of a foreign turn of phraſe; but I am ſenſible, how this permiſſion may degenerate into licentiouſneſs, with unſkilful writers. Bolingbroke, and writers about his time, abound with pure French words.

From theſe obſervations on POETICAL EXPRESSION, we may deduce that we are at preſent very deficient in it's diction, and that we may reaſonably ſuſpect it is an unſurmountable difficulty. It is a misfortune attending the

the progreſs of art; and if it is true, that we have attained to perfection, in the poetical art, the charms of a judicious novelty in diction is almoſt a hopeleſs labour. It is our opulence that produces this poverty; for we may ſay with the ancient Romans, alluding to their numerous conqueſts, "we periſh, becauſe of our abundance."

On habituating ourselves to an individual Pursuit.

TWO things in human life are at continual variance; and if we cannot eſcape from the one, we muſt be ſeparated from the other; ennui and pleaſure. Ennui is an afflicting ſenſation, if we may thus expreſs it, from a want of ſenſation; and pleaſure, is more pleaſure, according to the quantity of ſenſation. Let us invent a ſcheme, by which at once we repel ennui, and acquire and augment pleaſure. Senſation is received according to the capability of our organs; our organs may be almoſt incredibly improved by practice;* intenſe devotion to an object,

* As in the inſtances of the blind who has a finer tact, and the jeweller who has a finer ſight, than other men, who are not ſo much intereſted in refining their viſion and their feeling.

ject, muſt therefore preſent means of deriving more numerous and keener pleaſures from that object.

Hence the poet, long employed on a poem, has received a quantity of pleaſure, which no reader can ever feel; and hence one reader receives a quantity of pleaſure, unfelt by another. In the progreſs of any particular purſuit, there are a hundred delicious ſenſations, which are too intellectual, to be embodied into language. Every artiſt knows what uncommon combinations his meditations produce; and though ſome too imperfect, or too ſubtile, reſiſt his powers of diſplaying to the world, yet between the thought that firſt gave riſe to his deſign, and each one which appears in it, there are innumerable intermediate evaneſcencies of ſenſation (ſo to expreſs myſelf) which no man felt but himſelf. Theſe are pleaſures, which are in number, according to the intenſeneſs

of

of his faculties, and the quantity of his labour.

Although the above remark alludes to works of art, I would not confine it to theſe purſuits only; for any particular purſuit, from the manufacturing of pins, to the conſtruction of philoſophical ſyſtems, appears ſuſceptible of ſimilar pleaſures. We ſhall ſee, that every individual can exert that quantity of mind neceſſary to his wants, and adapted to his ſituation; and that the quality of pleaſure is nothing in the preſent queſtion. For I think that we are miſtaken concerning the gradations of human felicity. It does at firſt appear, that an aſtronomer rapt in abſtraction, while he gazes on a ſtar, muſt feel a more exquiſite delight, than a farmer who is conducting his team; or a poet muſt experience a higher gratification in modulating verſes, than a trader in arranging ſums. To this we may reply, that the happi-

neſs

neſs of the ploughman and the trader, may be as ſatisfactory as that of the aſtronomer and the poet. Our mind can only be converſant with thoſe ſenſations which ſurround us, and poſſeſſing the ſkill of managing them, we can form an artificial felicity; it is certain, that what the ſoul does not feel, no more affects it, than what the eye does not ſee. It is thus that the mean trader, habituated to low purſuits, can never be unhappy, becauſe he is not the general of an army; for this idea of felicity he has never received. The philoſopher who gives his entire years to the elevated purſuits of mind, is never unhappy, becauſe he is not in poſſeſſion of an Indian opulence, for the idea of accumulating this exotic ſplendour has never entered the range of his deſires. Nature, an impartial mother, renders felicity as perfect in the ſchool-boy who ſcourges his top, as in the aſtronomer who regulates his

ſtar. The thing contained can only be equal to the container; a full glaſs, is as full, as a full bottle; and a human ſoul may be as much ſatisfied, in the loweſt of human beings, as in the higheſt.

In this devotion to a particular object, what philoſophers call the ASSOCIATING IDEA, exiſts in all it's activity and energy; and it may be rendered productive of the ſenſations we deſire; for, when attached to one particular purſuit, this idea will generally point and conduct our thoughts to it. The aſſociating power is a ſovereign ſeated on his throne, while all our other ideas bend towards it, and obey it's mandates. Hence the following perſons experience their completeſt happineſs. A ſtudent in the midſt of his books; an artiſt among his productions; a farmer amidſt his lands; a merchant in his trade; a horſeman in his menagerie; a captain in his ſhip, &c.

&c. Theſe are all perſons who reſpectively enjoy more real felicity at thoſe hours, than in any other portion of their lives.

Many peculiar advantages attend the cultivation of one maſter paſſion, or occupation. In ſuperior minds it is a ſovereign that exiles others, and in inferior minds it enfeebles pernicious propenſities. It may render us uſeful to our fellow citizens, and what is of great conſequence, it imparts the moſt perfect independance to the individual. The more alſo, the ſovereign paſſion is compoſed of intellectual gratifications, the more exalted and perfect is it's independence. It is juſtly obſerved, by a great mathematician, that a geometrician might not be unhappy in a deſert.

We might therefore recommend the ſame unity in life, which gives ſuch a value when found in a picture or a poem. This unity of deſign, with a

centripetal force, draws all the rays of our exiſtence, and the more forcibly it draws, the more perfect is human felicity. But, if regardleſs of this, we yield ourſelves to the diſtracting variety of oppoſite purſuits with an equal paſſion, our ſoul is placed amidſt a continual ſhock of ideas, and happineſs is loſt by miſtakes. How often when accident has turned the mind firmly to one object, has it been diſcovered that it's occupation is another name for happineſs; for this occupation is a means of eſcaping from incongruous ſenſations. It ſecures us from the dreadful and dark vacuity of ſoul, as well as from the terrible whirlwind of ideas; reaſon itſelf is a paſſion, but a paſſion full of ſerenity.

It is obſervable of thoſe, who have devoted themſelves to an individual object, that it's importance is incredibly enlarged to their ſenſations. Intenſe attention magnifies like a microſcope;

ſcope; but, it is poſſible to apologize for their apparent extravagance from the conſideration, that they really obſerve excellencies not perceived by others of inferior application. I confeſs, this paſſion has been carried to a curious violence of affection; literary hiſtory affords numerous inſtances. I ſhall juſt obſerve, that in reading Dr. Burney's Muſical Travels, it would ſeem that muſic was the prime object of human life; that Richardſon the painter, in his Treatiſe on his beloved Art, cloſes all, by affirming that "*Raphael* is not only *equal*, but *ſuperior* to a *Virgil*, or a *Livy*, or a *Thucydides*, or a *Homer!*" And he proceeds by acquainting the world, how painting can reform our manners, increaſe our opulence, honour and power.* Denina,

* Our lively enthuſiaſt ſays elſewhere, "Painting is the utmoſt limit of human power, in the communication of ideas. Hiſtory begins, poetry raiſes higher, ſculpture goes yet farther, but painting compleats and perfects."

in his Revolutions of Literature, tells us, that to excel in hiſtorical compoſition, requires more ability than is exerciſed by the excelling maſters of any other art; becauſe it requires not only the ſame erudition, genius, imagination, taſte, &c. neceſſary for a poet, a painter, or a philoſopher, but the hiſtorian muſt alſo have ſome peculiar qualifications.* I think it was after this publication, he became an hiſtorian. Helvetius, an enthuſiaſt in the fine arts, and polite literature, has compoſed a Poem on Happineſs; and imagines, that it conſiſts in an excluſive love of the cultivation of letters and the arts. All this, perhaps, may ſhew that the more intenſely we attach ourſelves to an individual object, our ſenſations are more

* What would this heavy writer have ſaid, if he had heard, one of the literary paradoxes of the preſent day, that no extraordinary abilities are required to form a good hiſtorian? Johnſon ſaid, "great abilities are not requiſite in an hiſtorian; for in hiſtorical compoſition, all the greateſt powers of the human mind are quieſcent." See farther in Boſwell, vol. 1. p. 390.

more numerous, and more fervidly alive, than thoſe, who break the force of their feelings, in attempting to ſtrike on a variety of objects; and if this is true, we may conclude that it is one great ſource of human happineſs.

On Literary Genius.

WHEN the philoſophy of an age is rude, whatever excellence is produced, is immediately aſcribed to an occult power; when men, after a lapſe of ages, become minuter enquirers, and calmer reaſoners, it is diſcovered how much Art has entered into every great compoſition; and at length, among artiſts themſelves, it becomes a dubious point, whether *art* is not ſufficient to produce *ſimilar effects* to *genius*; or in other words, whether certain combinations of art, form not genius itſelf.

We ſtill have a few writers who exult in ſome myſtical power in their faculties; who hint at the ſolicitude of nature at their birth, and to employ the language of Milton, derived from the

the ſuperſtitious credulity of his age, who diſſert with fluency, on

"The Stellar Virtue,"

which Boileau has made the firſt poſition in the *art* of poetry. Frail females formerly denounced their ſtars as the cauſe of their incontinence; and we have idlers who apologiſe for their defects from no lower an influence; a reſolute love of virtue would have preſerved the female chaſte, and a reſolute love of labour would have rendered the idler active.

While ſome have rejected this occult influence of the ſtars, others enjoy equal extravagancies; genius has been regulated by the degree of longitude and latitude; it has been derived from the ſubtilty of the blood, and even from the refinements of cookery; others ſuppoſe that a writer of imagination is incapable of learned reſearch, and that for every particular ſtudy a peculiar conſtruction of the intellec-

tual

tual powers becomes neceſſary; that the ſolidity of judgment impedes the vigour of fancy, and that the poet cannot inveſtigate nature with the eye of philoſophic ſcience.*

* Genius has been divided, and ſubdivided. There is a genius for oratory, conſiſting of the art of moving the paſſions, united with the art of applying our arguments; a genius for phyſics and geometry, when occupied in calculating the motions and action of the globes of the univerſe, and the whole phenomena of nature; a genius for painting and ſculpture, when the pencil and chiſſel trace on the marble or canvaſs the actions or the features of a hero; and the genius for poetry is ſaid to conſiſt in the power which nature imparts by phyſical ſenſibility, and a happy conformation of the organs to certain perſons, in conceiving boldly, and delivering eaſily; in painting what is ſtrongly felt, and it is, in a word, what Horace calls *Splendida bilis*, which we are further informed is *a kind of central fire*, which elevates the mind, warms the imagination, which makes one think with force, and deſcribe with livelineſs. See on this ſubject the *Principes pour la Lecture des Poetes* by the Abbé Mallet.

But what is gained by all theſe myſtical diſtinctions, this *ſplendida bilis* and *central fire?* Are we always to take words for things? Do ſuch critics ſay any thing more, than that genius, is genius? I lament that even Pope extends this ſyſtem to criticiſm; for he ſays of poets and critics,

"Both muſt alike from *heaven* derive their light;
Theſe *born to judge*, as well as thoſe to *write*,"

which is certainly contrary to experience; *taſte*, the characteriſtic of criticiſm, is now acknowledged to be obtainable by a conſtant attachment to the moſt finiſhed performances of art. And when he adds,

"Let

With chilling fancies like theſe, have the minds of the moſt adventurous geniuſes been rendered puſillanimous; and grand deſigns, conceived with ardent felicity, have ſuddenly expired, becauſe their affrighted parents refuſed to foſter them with the vitality of induſtry. In an accompliſhed genius, Horace, one of the moſt philoſophical poets, allows that art muſt be united with nature; but we probably attach different ideas to this power of nature, than the philoſophy of the age of Horace allowed him to acquire. Since his time, and even in the preſent day, ſome regard genius as nothing ſhort of inſpiration, and employ, in the ſober diſquiſitions of philoſophy, the fanciful expreſſions of poetry. We are told, that to attain to a ſuperiority in

"Let ſuch teach others who themſelves excel;
And cenſure freely who have written well."

The maxim is not leſs erroneous; for the beſt poets are not always the ſureſt critics, as in the caſe of Goldſmith and others; and moſt of the beſt critics have not been poets.

in any art, we muſt be *born* with a certain *ſuſceptibility*, or *aptitude*; we muſt be *born* a poet, or a painter; or as one painter complimented another, by ſaying, that he was a painter in his mother's womb. Such are the myſtic reveries ſtill indulged by the artiſt, who is intereſted in exciting the wonder of the ignorant; but ſuch myſticiſm is not leſs injurious to art, than viſionary fanaticiſm to religion.

Dryden traces the whole hiſtory of genius in a couplet,

"What in nature's dawn the child *admired*,
The youth *endeavoured* and the man ACQUIRED."

Yet is it not always *neceſſary* that this admiration ſhould be felt in childhood, or in youth, ſince accidental cauſes have frequently directed the purſuits of genius.* Careſſes and coercion alſo, have *made* many a youth, a bright genius; patronage and poverty have *ſtimulated*

* Some inſtances are collected in Curioſities of Literature. Fourth edition, vol. 1. p.

ſtimulated men to become illuſtrious artiſts.

In the hiſtory of genius we are preſented with wider proſpects, by the late attentions beſtowed on the ſtudies of biography. In tracing the hiſtory of philoſophers and poets, we have traced the genius of philoſophy and poetry; we have obſerved that certain events produced certain conſequences, and why men, with an equal aptitude for genius, have not always become men of genius. Illuſtrious characters are rare, owing to the rarity of thoſe human coincidencies which produce illuſtrious characters. Man is ſo influenced by moral cauſes, that the perfection of his genius is ever proportioned to their effects. When men of letters reflected on the manner of their own attainments, and on thoſe events of literary hiſtory which related to others, they diſcovered that the faculties of the mind, are not *gifts* from nature,

ture, but effects from human cauſes, or *acquiſitions* of art.

Every man of common organiſation has the power of becoming a man of genius, if to this be added a ſolitary devotion to art, and a vehement paſſion for glory. It is the capacity of long attention, which, in the preſent day, muſt make one man ſuperior to another. Phyſical ſenſibility may vary, and defective organs cannot be ſupplied by any artificial mode. But in general, nature has more impartiality than ſome of her children will allow; and it would be very difficult to find men, who have been ſo cruelly neglected by our common mother, as not to be endowed with ſufficient powers to excel in ſome particular department, when, by examining their mental ſtores, they have the art of diſcovering the kind of ſtudy for which they are beſt adapted, and when having made this important diſcovery, moral and phyſical

phyſical cauſes, are not inimical to their progreſs. An idiot is more rare than a man of genius.

The man of genius ſhould ever examine his phyſical and moral ſtate; for to ameliorate their advantages, and ſupply their deficiencies, are of the greateſt conſequence to his ſucceſs. A defect in phyſical ſenſibility, will diſorder ſome portion of genius; and the purblind eye of Johnſon, which denied him the taſte for picturesque beauty, occaſioned much erroneous criticiſm, without, however, diminiſhing his *acquired* faculties, on topics where this ſenſibility was not requiſite. Defects in the moral ſtate are innumerable; ſometimes they contract, ſometimes they enfeeble, and ſometimes they annihilate genius. Shenſtone, who devoted his days to poetry, equally with Pope, could never reach his powers. But was his life not a ſeries of diſcontent and liſtleſſneſs; ever incapable

pable of energy, and often ſinking into torpidity? Without the vigour of hope, and without the exhilaration of enjoyment. Pope on the contrary was fortunate in every circumſtance of early friendſhips, of augmenting independence, and of that continued fervour of diſpoſition, which cheriſhed by patronage, knows no pauſe till the remoteſt excellence is graſped. In other circumſtances Dryden might have proved ſuperior to Pope, and Otway had equalled Shakeſpeare. It is a moſt judicious obſervation made by Helvetius, that it is not ſufficient to poſſeſs genius, to obtain it's title. One diſcovers, another improves, a third accompliſhes, and this laſt is ſaluted as the genius; although he has really not advanced the art, *in a greater proportion*, than his leſs fortunate predeceſſors.

All that the fineſt organiſation can impart in the preſent day, will never form one work of genius. The mere

natural

natural produce, of the moſt fertile individual, will now be only a pitiable indigence; for the opulence of the mind can now only be formed by ſtoring it with acquired knowledge; and the moſt valuable productions will be thoſe in which the induſtry of the mind has been moſt vigilantly exerciſed. The reſult of what we uſually term *natural abilities*, will reſemble the haws and berries which our ancient Britons might have conſidered as excellent fruit, but a modern Briton knows that the richneſs of our orchards has been borrowed from all the varieties of climate. Hence, pertinacity of meditation, becomes a commerce of the mind; it aſſembles and combines the ideas of others, but the ſenſations it experiences are it's own. We *learn* to think, by being converſant with the thoughts of others; but this is denied, ſince it is aſſerted that the thoughts of others encumber our own. He, however,

ever, who is not familiariſed with the fineſt thoughts of the fineſt writers, will one day be mortified to obſerve, that his beſt thoughts are their indifferent ones. Nature reſpects a certain progreſſion; ſhe expands by a gradual amplification; ſhe makes no leaps. But he who fondly dotes on what he terms his *natural powers*, audaciouſly imagines, that alone he can arrive at that point of knowledge, attained by the fraternal labours of the moſt eminent geniuſes. To think with thinking men, is to run with agile racers. But as this is not always attended to, we abound with writers who are far removed from an excellence they *could* have *acquired*; as he who, accuſtomed to run in a ſolitary courſe, felicitated himſelf as being one of the firſt racers, but received the public deriſion when he preſented himſelf at the Olympic games.

In

In meditating on the characters, the modes of life, the ſlow formation, and the painful vigilance of ſome great writers, I have been of opinion, that their conſpicuous labours, were the gradual acquiſitions of *art*. Of theſe writers many have acknowledged that they could produce nothing valuable till a flame, caught by contact, had lighted up their minds; they reſemble certain trees, which, though they could produce no valuable fruit of themſelves, are excellent for grafting on. The minds, of ſuch writers, are like a globe of glaſs, which, when rapidly revolved, and the hand applied to it's ſurface, will grow warm, emit light, and attract bodies. Among this claſs of writers, we might place Boileau and Racine; Pope and Gray; Akenſide and Armſtrong; Monteſquieu and Johnſon. When Boileau aſked Chapelle, a facile natural writer, an opinion of his poetry, Chapelle

made this ſarcaſtic compariſon—You are a great ox, who, labouring ſlowly and painfully, make a deep furrow. Boileau has himſelf admirably deſcribed this act of the ox, and I ſhall apply it to writers who reſemble him.

——Un Boeuf preſſé par l'aiguillon,
Traçat, d'un pas tardif, un penible ſillon.

IMITATED.

Urged by the goad, an ox, laborious, paced;
A painful furrow, ſlowly toiling, traced.

The French appear to have formed this diſtinction between great writers. They call Corneille, *un homme de Genie*, and Racine, *un homme d'Eſprit*. The latter kind of writers are the more agreeable; for though they never ſurpaſs the former, yet they are rarely inferior, and can more happily adapt themſelves to a variety of topics. Men of genius have ſtronger but more confined faculties.

The natural facility which ſome writers appear to poſſeſs, forms no difficulty

culty to this ſyſtem. Such authors as a Fielding and a Goldſmith, a Sheridan and a Wolcot, are not ſuppoſed to have overwhelmed their minds by extraneous ſtudies; and ſuch writers are often even very illiterate. They addreſs themſelves to the heart, and not to the head. But ſtill from *induſtry*, and pertinacity of attention, is their rapidity of combination derived; and not from what marvelling ignorance ſometimes regards as inſpiration or organiſation. They have given a ſtrong direction to their mind, in the great ſyſtem of human life; they therefore excel in that point, though they may be, and generally are, deficient in other literary qualities; for we ſhall always find that no man can know what he has not learnt, or know that ſuddenly which requires an habitual attention.

And indeed, if we attend to the precious obſervations of thoſe who have

excelled in art or ſcience, we ſhall hear of no romance of original powers, no inſpirations from nature, no divine impulſe that creates a world, at a word. The painter diſcovers that it is long before the pencil accompliſhes thoſe beauties which he has long meditated, and the poet that he conſumes many years in verſe, before a great poem is even attempted. The following facts trace the progreſſive powers of genius. Reynolds painted many hours every day during the long ſpace of thirty years; Goldſmith compoſed his poems by ſlow and laborious efforts, and they are the finiſhed productions of ſeveral years. Churchill was a verſifier at fifteen, but was not known as a poet till after thirty. Sterne, who read at leaſt as much as he thought, was not an *original* genius till at a late period of life. Addiſon, before he commenced his Spectators, had amaſſed materials with the aſſiduity

ity of a ſtudent.* The immortal work of Monteſquieu was the beloved occupation of twenty years; the wit of Butler was not extemporaneous, but painfully elaborated from notes which he inceſſantly accumulated. And to cloſe our teſtimonies, the Emilius of Rouſſeau was the fruit, to employ the writer's own energetic language, of twenty years meditation, and of three years compoſition.

Among the advocates of our preſent ſyſtem, we rank the firſt geniuſes of the age. Johnſon, Helvetius, and Reynolds, have ceaſeleſsly enforced it's principles, have compoſed in the ardour of conviction, and have given ſtability to the beautiful ſtructure they erected by the maſſineſs of demonſtra-

 tion.

* Young, in his poetical Epiſtle to Tickle, alluding to Addiſon's Spectators, ſays,

" *A chance-amuſement* poliſhed half an age."

But it has been ſince diſcovered, that the reverſe is the fact; for Addiſon had collected his materials to the amount of *three folio volumes*. The commentator of the laſt edition of the Spectators gives this inſtructive information.

tion. Authorities from periods more remote, are not wanting; Quintilian and Locke conſider men to have an equal aptitude to mental capacity, and Paſcal ſays, that what is called nature, is only our firſt habit; but what ſeveral great men have diſcerned confuſedly through a miſt, thoſe who compoſed in a happier age, have viewed in the ſunſhine of biography.

In the Diſcourſes of Reynolds, this principle is laid down as the foundation of all excellence in art. The preſident expreſſes himſelf in this manner. "Not to enter into metaphyſical diſcuſſions on the nature and eſſence of *genius*, I will venture to aſſert, that *aſſiduity*, unabated by difficulty, and a *diſpoſition* eagerly directed to the object of it's purſuit, will produce effects ſimilar to thoſe which ſome call the reſult of *natural powers*." The opinion of Johnſon not only appears in his converſations, but in his compoſitions; he

he has touched on this topic in the twenty-fifth and forty-third Ramblers, and in the perſon of Imlach, we are inſtructed, that when he *reſolved* to *make* himſelf a poet, he tells us that "he ſaw every thing with a new purpoſe." The entire work of L'Eſprit of Helvetius inculcates the ſame principles.

On this delicate topic I ſhall hazard the following rapid glance. In the rude periods of ſociety, when a writer can have but few predeceſſors, he will pour forth, what Milton elegantly and ſweetly terms "Virgin Fancies." He muſt then meditate on the great original nature; the impreſſions muſt be vivid, though rude, and the combinations novel, though wild. Some, whoſe phyſical ſenſibility, improved by imperceptible habit, may receive ſenſations more lively than others, will exerciſe a facility and celerity of conception apparently ſupernatural to the vulgar

vulgar and the ignorant. In the latter claſs even the higheſt minds muſt then be ranked; and it is not improbable that the artiſt himſelf is not leſs perſuaded than his admirers, that he is agitated by a certain impulſe, and that his performances could not be produced by human means. *Eſt Deus in Nobis*, exclaims the ſelf wondering Ovid, at a later period indeed, but when the philoſophy of the mind had made but little progreſs. Hence the origin of that fanciful interpoſition of nature in the caſe of men of genius; and it is then that poets are regarded as prophets, and philoſophers as magicians.

The Monkiſh ages blended many of the abſurdities of polytheiſm with their peculiar ones; and it was in this period, Eraſmus informs us, that that gothic adage was formed worthy of Monkiſh taſte, and Monkiſh credulity; *poeta naſcitur, non fit*; which an excellent

lent judge of poetry contradicts, by affirming, that a poet may be *made*, as well as *born*. But a great revolution appears in the world of taſte; the flame of inveſtigation riſes gradually in the moſt ſecret retirements of nature. She comes, in all her ſimplicity, and all her ſolitary majeſty, unaccompanied by the adventitious ſplendour of fancy, the groteſque chimeras of aſtoniſhment, and the terrific forms of ſuperſtition. When we underſtand nature, what becomes of apparitions, of witchery, of prophecy, and the inſpiration of genius?

Genius may now be divided into an enthuſiaſm caught from nature, and an enthuſiaſm received from art.

The enthuſiaſm from nature is diſtinguiſhed by it's facility, celerity, and vividneſs; ſufficient to form an ardent effuſion in the early periods of ſociety. Such are the relicks of all antient poetry. But as the ſphere of poetical invention

invention muſt then be very circumſcribed, we obſerve, in ſuch compoſitions, a recurrence of the ſame objects and the ſame ideas. Man *creates* by *imitation*; but he creates little in the infancy of ſociety, becauſe he has ſcarcely any thing to imitate. When we examine the effuſions of the Bards, the wild poetry of the Indians, and even Oſſian, who probably has received many modern embelliſhments, we perceive that paucity of ideas, which muſt be natural at this period of ſociety.*

This enthuſiaſm from nature diminiſhes in the progreſs of refinement. Artiſts not infrequently complain that nature is nearly exhauſted, and not without

* Homer muſt not be quoted as an example of the enthuſiaſm from nature; nor can he be conſidered as the moſt original, becauſe he is the moſt ancient of our claſſic poets. We are told, that ſcarce any ſpecies of learning was unknown to him; and it is probable that the Mæonian was not more original than his imitator the Mantuan, and that his immortal labours were compoſed with an enthuſiaſm from art, as well as from nature.

without reaſon; for it would, perhaps, aſtoniſh ſome, if they were ſhown how very few *original* notions form the great treaſury of human invention. Nature is regular in her grand characteriſtics. She is ever the ſame univerſal power; but in the progreſs of ſociety, a great variation obtains in the human paſſions. We all think alike on certain objects in their general conception, but moſt think differently in their individual examination; hence criticiſm has obſerved, that the beauties of art are ſometimes local, and ſometimes univerſal. But not to wander into metaphyſical diſcuſſion, we may remark, that pure nature will diſguſt by it's obviouſneſs and it's facility; elegance, the characteriſtic of refinement, means a ſelection, and, at this period we diſguiſe and raiſe the offenſive rudeneſs of truth, by the attractive graces of veriſimilitude. A noble ſentiment occupies the ſoul of the artiſt,

and

and he toils after an ideal perfection. The richeſt combinations throw their dazzling light on his imagination; emulation rivals and ſurpaſſes; in this glorious ſtrife, individual is oppoſed to individual, and people to people. Our galleries are filled with pictures, and our libraries with poems.

A diverſity of genius becomes more diſtinguiſhable, as taſte becomes more exquiſite. One kind is peculiar to this age; the genius of ſeveral can now be made to produce an original one. A ſtudent, to borrow an expreſſion from chemiſtry, amalgamates the characteriſtics of preceding maſters. The hiſtory of the orders in architecture, is the hiſtory of genius. We have the ſevere Tuſcan, the chaſte Doric, the elegant Ionic, the light Corinthian, and at length appears the Compoſite uniting theſe varieties.

Models are now propoſed by critics; for Art is now ſuſpended on a point; if

if by our dexterity we preſerve not the equilibrium, if we paſs or decline from the point, we ſlide into barbariſm. In vain ſome daring ſpirits ſcorn the mandates of taſte; Time is the avenger of neglected criticiſm.

At this period ſome, enamoured of the illuſive idea of *original powers*, pretend to draw merely from the native fountains of nature. Uneducated artiſts occaſionally appear, among the lower occupations of life, who are immediately received as original geniuſes. But it is at length perceived, that the genuine requiſites of poetry, at this period of refinement, are not only beyond their reach, but often beyond their comprehenſion. Theſe *inſpired* geniuſes have never ſurvived the tranſient ſeaſon of popular wonder, and derive their mediocrity from the facility of conſulting the finiſhed compoſitions of true genius.

Nor

Nor muſt we conceive that that vein of imitation, which muſt ever run through the works of great artiſts, is a mechanical proceſs. By an intenſe ſtudy of preceding maſters, they are taught the enchantments of art; marvellous and exquiſite ſtrokes which exiſt not in nature. A fine copy of nature affects their organs more than a real ſcene. On examination, it will be found that the moſt capital productions of our firſt artiſts, are really compoſed in this manner. A Raphael borrowed as freely from other painters, as a Milton from other poets.

It may now be enquired, that ſince we acknowledge there are cauſes which may diſenable a genuine ſtudent from *acquiring genius*, what is gained by this new ſyſtem? We reply an uſeful knowledge of truth, and a contempt for that popular prejudice, which ever echoes the pernicious notion, that an *artiſt* muſt be *born* with a

peculiar

peculiar genius, or intellectual conſtruction.

An ardent and aſpiring youth is diſmayed at the firſt difficulties of art, becauſe he eaſily imagines that a maxim which has been ſo long received as inconteſtable, is therefore incontrovertable. I believe that the ſucceſs of an artiſt oftener depends on *good luck*, than on *organiſation*. Ariſtotle has ſaid, that to become eminent in any profeſſion, three things are requiſite, nature, ſtudy, and practice. How often does it become neceſſary to eraſe the word *nature*, and ſupply it's place by *good fortune!* We often loſe much, when we inform a young artiſt, that he muſt have been *born* a poet, or a painter; ſince it is impoſſible to decide whether he is born ſuch unleſs he practiſes the arts; and it is certain that no excellence in art can be acquired without long and unwearied induſtry. Artiſts who have evin-

ced nothing of this *birth-right* in their early attempts, have ſometimes concluded by being great artiſts. Induſtry, whether it conſiſt in an inceſſant exerciſe of the faculties, by meditating on the labours of others, or in obſervations on what paſſes around us, is the ſureſt path that conducts to the ſeats of fame; but ſuch intervening obſtacles as may oppoſe with fatal and deadly effects, are in the power, not of philoſophy, but of fortune.

I ſhall enforce theſe obſervations, by tranſcribing a ſentiment of Johnſon. "Every man who purpoſes to grow eminent by learning, ſhould carry in his mind at once, the difficulty of excellence, and the force of induſtry, and remember that fame is not conferred, but as the recompence of labour, and that labour, vigorouſly continued, has not often failed of it's reward."

The

The following eſſay offers ſome reflections on LITERARY INDUSTRY, which, perhaps, may confirm the preſent.

On Literary Industry.

WHEN youthful genius meditates on a great compoſition, he does not uſually reflect on the mode of it's performance; his deſpair is equal to his admiration; and there is danger that he may reſemble the young arithmetician, who reſigned his art, becauſe in the firſt leſſons, he had obſerved the total amount of an immenſe ſeries, which he could not ſuppoſe he was *born* to comprehend.

If a Savage wandering in his woods, accuſtomed to no other habitation than his dark cave, or ill-conſtructed hovel, ſhould diſcover an edifice, conſiderable in it's magnitude, and regular in it's arrangement, he would immediately conclude that it was the reſidence of a divine being, conſtructed by

by divine power. He would conſider that no human hand could raiſe the columns, and no human deſign could invent an order ſo beautiful. If the Savage, however, becomes inſtructed, he diſcovers that it's author was a being of his own ſpecies, that the hand which erected, was ſuperior in ſkill, but not in ſtrength, to his own; and that if he would ſubmit to the ſame directions which conducted the other, he might himſelf be capable of producing a ſimilar compoſition. This Savage is the unreflecting reader, or that ſimple youth, whoſe admiration cloſes with deſpair.

Few works of magnitude preſented themſelves at once in full extent, to their authors; patiently were they examined, and inſenſibly were they formed. We often obſerve this circumſtance noticed in their prefaces. Writers have propoſed to themſelves a little piece of two acts, and the farce

has become a comedy of five; an eſſay ſwells into a treatiſe, and a treatiſe into volumes.

Let us trace the progreſſion of the mind in the formation of it's ſpeculations. At the firſt glance a man of genius throws around a ſubject, he perceives not more than one or two ſtriking circumſtances, unobſerved by another. As he revolves the ſubject, the whole mind is gradually agitated, and it is then, that acquiring force by exertion, he diſcovers talents that he knew not he poſſeſſed. At firſt he ſaw (except the few leading objects which invited his contemplation) every thing dimly; to the ſtudious eye of genius, every thing becomes orderly and diſtinct; the twilight gradually diſperſes, and every form ſhines in the brilliant light of imagination. It is then he is excurſive and unweary; it is then that all is beauty to his eye, all is harmony to his ear. It is like viewing a landſcape

landſcape at an early hour in a ſummer morning; the riſing ſun perhaps only reſts on a particular object, and the ſcene is wrapt in miſt; as the light and warmth increaſe, the miſts fade, and the ſcene aſſumes it's varied charms.

Such is the feebleneſs of human faculties, that, it is probable, if they could perceive at the firſt view the whole of the ſubject, they would remain inert in indolence, and reject with deſpondence it's final accompliſhment. In the preceding eſſay we have obſerved that the greateſt works have been inſenſibly formed; and to prove that the ſlighteſt conceptions may ſerve for the leading circumſtances of even works of magnitude, I ſhall notice three modern compoſitions of great and kindred merit. That exquiſite poem, Les Jardins of the Abbé de Lille, derives it's exiſtence from the ſimple circumſtance of a lady aſking

for a few verſes on rural topics. His ſpecimens pleaſed, and the poet, animated by a ſmile, heaped ſketches on ſketches, till he found himſelf enabled to weave them into a concording whole, which forms one of the fineſt didactic poems in the language. "The botanic garden" was at firſt only a few looſe deſcriptions of flowers, which caſually excited the poet's philoſophical curioſity; and we have only to lament that the Engliſh bard wanted the addreſs, or the induſtry of the French poet: A deficiency of intereſting order is the radical defect of that compoſition. "The pleaſures of memory" was the ſlow and perfect production of ten years; the poet at firſt propoſed a ſimple deſcription in a few lines, but imperceptibly conducted by his meditations, from theſe few verſes, was at length compoſed a poem, important alike for it's extent, it's inveſtigation, and it's beauty. Similar circumſtances

cumſtances gave the origin of the Lutrin; and the Dunciad is an amplification of the Mac Flecnoe of Dryden. The Henriade of Voltaire was at firſt only intended for a poem on the League, and it's want of unity of deſign, as an epic, aroſe from this circumſtance.

MEDITATION may be defined the *induſtry of the mind.* On it's habitual exertion depend all our great efforts; for literary induſtry to obtain it's purpoſe muſt become habitual. It is then, whereever we go, whatever we ſee, from what we read, and what we hear, ſome acquiſitions are brought to adorn our favourite topics. I am much pleaſed, and much inſtructed, by that anecdote of an ancient general, who, in the profoundeſt peace, practiſed ſtratagems of war, and when walking with his friends, and arriving at ſome remarkable ſpot, was accuſtomed to conſult with them, on a mode of defence or attack. Hence he derived

the

the rare talent of ever being accompanied by his genius, and to this general the victories of war were obtained by the labours of peace. The great poet, and the great painter, are alike intent on their reſpective objects; and do, no leſs than this general, paſs their remarkable ſpots, without bringing home ſentiments and images, forms and colours.

The greateſt works have been derived from petty commencements, and always formed by ſlow and gradual renovations of induſtry. Induſtry, indeed, is but a mean word, and appears more appropriate to mechanical labours, than to the operations of genius. If genius is to be conſidered as inſpiration, the philoſophers of this literary age will acknowledge that we have produced no works of genius; and that even the livelieſt conceptions of our poets are rarely formed by that celerity, and fury, which ſome are yet

ſo

ſo credulous, and ſo ignorant as to ſuppoſe. The manuſcripts of one of our moſt *original* living bards, would aſtoniſh ſome of his admirers by their numerous raſures; but every blot on them is like the artful patches on the face of a beauty, which improve it's charms. The induſtry which we are now to underſtand, reſembles, but little, mechanical aſſiduity; it is a continued exerciſe of the nobleſt faculties, which expand as they are uſed; a reſolute intellectual labour; a combination of many means to obtain one end. It is ſtudy invigorated by meditation; it is criticiſm, which, if we may ſo expreſs ourſelves, is a continuation or ſupplement of the ſpirit of the original author. This induſtry is that art, which ſeiſes, as if it were by the rapidity of inſpiration, whatever it diſcovers in the works of others, which may enrich it's own ſtores; which knows by a quick apprehenſion, what to examine

mine and what to imbibe; and which receives an atom of intelligence, from the minds of others on it's own mind, as an accidental ſpark falling on a heap of nitre, is ſufficient to raiſe a powerful blaze.

If we look into literary biography, we perceive that every illuſtrious writer, in one mode or another, was an indefatigable ſtudent. Tillotſon obſerves, that whenever the ancient hiſtorians deſcribe an eminent character, they ever employ theſe expreſſions, that he was *incredibili induſtria, diligentia ſingulari.* Cicero and Pliny, to habituate themſelves to the graces of the Grecian writers, even at a remote period of life, practiſed the labours of tranſlation; and there was no mode or art they omitted proper for correction. They read their work to a few friends, they recited it to an audience, and even ſent it to their diſtant friends for emendation. This unwearied zeal has

rendered

rendered their works immortal, and capable of equalling whatever the ambition of the moderns can oppoſe. Voltaire, lively as he may appear, was an indefatigable ſtudent, and never read, even at the cloſe of life, without a pen in his hand. The immortal and voluminous labours of the philoſophic Buffon, are derived from the ſimple circumſtance of early riſing; he long ſtrove againſt a natural indulgence of eaſe, and uſed ſevere precautions. It is not I who attribute his works to this petty circumſtance, it is himſelf. The moſt original genius of this age, carries a little book for hints, for hemiſticks, and any occaſional obſervation. which may ſtart in all it's warmth from the inſpection of a preſent object. Perhaps no ſtudent was more laborious than Milton, and his induſtry was even equal to his genius. Obſerve the modeſt and remarkable expreſſion he employs, in one of his proſe works, alluding

alluding to his intention of compoſing an epic. After mentioning Taſſo, he adds, " It haply would be no raſhneſs from an *equal diligence* and *inclination* to preſent the like." Such was the vigilant induſtry of Pope, that he appears to have derived his genius from this characteriſtic.

Theſe obſervations will hold through all ages, and ſtill more in ages of refinement, than in the earlier periods of ſociety; for it is a truth of ſome importance in literature to be known, that the farther progreſs we make in knowledge, renders ſtudy more neceſſary; that as taſte is more refined, labour becomes more eſſential; and that however modern writers muſt loſe ſomething of originality, they have, even if their ſubject is preoccupied, more difficulties to overcome, more art to diſplay, more labour to exerciſe, more novelty to court, than their anceſtors, who wrote with the licentious ſpirit of their

their age; and who, though not ſuperior in point of courage, handled their pen with a ferocity, not permitted to their more poliſhed deſcendants.

On the Influence of Climate on the Human Mind.

AMONG the follies of the wiſe, may be ranked that ſyſtem which circumſcribes the energies of the human mind, by the influence of climate. It has been confuted, and is ſtill believed, for there are ſome whom no confutations can confute. We ſhall form an enquiry into it's origin, with ſome notices of that fanciful chain it has thrown over the intellects of the moſt vigorous geniuſes, and we ſhall inculcate the independence of the intellectual powers.

This extravagant ſyſtem derives it's modern rejuveneſcence from a writer whoſe talents are the moſt brilliant and ſeductive, modern literature diſplays. Monteſquieu, ever vigilant in ſtriking

ſtriking the mind by novelties, diſcovered in the writings of ſome of the ancients, a few fanciful and caſual conjectures on the influence of climate on the human mind, and which he alſo extended to manners. Curious abſurdities, not leſs eccentric, remain yet for ſome future Monteſquieu to adopt. Theſe ſlight conjectures he ſeized with avidity, amplified with ingenuity, decorated by the graces of fancy, and divulged with the triumphant air of a modern diſcovery.

Baillet, who wrote at the cloſe of the laſt century, without a ſolitary charm of Monteſquieu's fancy, was well acquainted with this extravagant notion. It is probable, that to this compiler Monteſquieu, with ſome kindred geniuſes, were indebted for the ſeminal heat of all their variegated flowers. In his volume on National Prejudices, he adverts to this ſyſtem, and quotes Hippocrates, Plato, Ariſ-

totle, Seneca, and others, who had conceived that the temperature of the air contributes ſomething to the natural diſpoſitions of the mind. Long anterior to Monteſquieu, our own Milton expreſſed this prejudice ;* and as Filangieri obſerves, Chardin, Fontenelle, Du Bos, and others, had explained

* It is curious to obſerve, that Spenſer, that child of fancy, had on this ſubject, a ſounder philoſophy than Milton. I allude to his View of the State of Ireland ; it is compoſed in the dialogue manner, and one of the ſpeakers conceives that the barbarity of that country proceeds from the very *genius* of the *ſoil*, or *influence* of the *ſtars*. But he is juſtly reprimanded by the other, in expreſſions ſo philoſophical and pleaſing, that I ſhall tranſcribe them, " Surely, I ſuppoſe this but a vain conceit of *ſimple men*, which *judge things* by their *effects*, and not by their *cauſes* ; for I would rather think the cauſe of this evil which hangeth upon that country, to proceed rather of the unſoundneſs of the counſels, and plots which you ſay have been oftentimes laid for the reformation, or of faintneſs in following and effecting the ſame, than of any ſuch fatal courſe appointed of God, as you miſdeem ; but *it is the manner of men, that when they are fallen into any abſurdity*, or *their actions ſucceed not as they would, they are always ready to impute the blame thereof unto the heavens, ſo to excuſe their own follies* and *imperfections*." The admirable Spenſer is another inſtance to prove that an exquiſite imagination may be combined with the ſoundeſt intellect ; and it is now, perhaps, the firſt time that Spenſer the poet, has been quoted as Spenſer the philoſopher.

plained and adopted the notion. But what the reaſoning of Chardin, the wit of Fontenelle, and the ingenuity of Du Bos, failed to eſtabliſh, was fixed by the ſeductive eloquence of Monteſquieu. His brilliant ſtrokes dazzled the eyes of Europe, and iced, with an additional froſt, the heart of many a literary Ruſſian and Dane. It is thus follies are hereditary among writers, and one generation perpetuates or revives the extinct follies of another.

It was the talent of exquiſite compoſition that gave to Monteſquieu the power of diſguiſing an exploded theory. Who can reſiſt ſuch poignant epigrams as theſe, allowing that every lively epigram is a concluſive argument?—"The empire of climate is the firſt of all empires."—"As we diſtinguiſh climates by degrees of latitude, we might diſtinguiſh them, thus to expreſs myſelf, by degrees of ſenſibi-

 lity."

lity."—"In thoſe countries, inſtead of precepts, we muſt have padlocks."—Such is the witty ſyſtem of the preſident Monteſquieu, which perhaps was firſt conceived with a ſmile, but conducted with ingenious gravity. We ſuffer our follies to become agreeable, when we ſuffer them to become familiar.

When the "Spirit of laws" was firſt publiſhed, every literary centinel did not ſilently admit the enemy of intellectual freedom, nor was every genius rendered ſomniferous by the corruptions of wit. The alarm was given. This paradox kindled the philoſophic indignation of Gray, and inſpired his exquiſite muſe to commence a poem of conſiderable magnitude, deſigned to combat a poſition ſo fatal to intellectual exertion. Churchill revolted from the degrading notion; a line on genius conveys his idea, that it is not

circumſcribed

circumſcribed by local ſituation, for, ſays he,

" It may hereafter, e'en in Holland riſe."

Armſtrong found it neceſſary to inveigh with ſarcaſtic acerbity againſt this ſyſtem; but it was the philoſophic Hume, who with ſolid arguments cruſhed the brilliant epigrams of Monteſquieu.

Filangieri,* who had all the advantage of poſterior knowledge, united to an inveſtigating genius, has marched between theſe ſyſtematiſers and their adverſaries, by attempting to ſhew that Climate influences the mind as a relative, not as an abſolute cauſe, and that the difference is not perceptible in temperate climates. But one of his political reveries is that of drying marſhes, and felling woods to change the character of a people. I much

 fear

* Filangieri's Science of Legiſlation has been tranſlated, and commented on, by Mr. Kendall, with ſuch energy of ſtyle, that it affords the pleaſure of an original performance.

fear that the Italian, (for his nation are moſt politic refiners,) has only miſtaken the national humour of Addiſon, who tells us, that "a famous univerſity in this land, was formerly very much infeſted with *puns*; but whether or no this might not ariſe from the *fens* and *marſhes* in which it was ſituated, and which are now *drained*, I muſt leave to the determination of more ſkilful naturaliſts."

As France is a very extenſive country, and has great variation of climate, it offered an ample circuit for theſe ſyſtematiſers to verify their favourite poſitions, by tracing the effects of climate through that diverſified country. The inhabitants of Picardy being placed in a colder ſituation than the other provinces, were imagined to be eminent for their indefatigable labour, and their writers were ſuppoſed to be ſtudents of great erudition. But here, as almoſt in every inſtance, where facts

are

are produced to confirm this fanciful theory, we ſhall find that moral are often taken for phyſical effects. Baillet remarks on this obſervation concerning Picardy, that the induſtry of it's writers is owing to thoſe devaſtations of war, which, having injured the fortunes of the natives, induced them rather to apply to uſeful than to agreeable compoſitions, as a means of ameliorating their fortune. Normandy having great inequality of climate, was ſuppoſed to occaſion a ſimilar inequality in the literary productions of it's authors; and Auvergne having high mountains and deep vallies, was conjectured to produce both men of great genius and great dullneſs; for thoſe born on the mountains were ſaid to have more delicate organs, and a more ætherial ſpirit, than the groſs and ſtupid ſtudents of the valleys. Such are the materials, which, with many others,

might be employed in a hiſtory of the follies of philoſophy.*

But if an Engliſhman is amuſed by theſe airy fancies, he will come at length to reſent, with a due ſpirit of indignation, the national attacks which theſe fantaſtic ſyſtematiſers have conſtantly levelled at our country. Britain has been conſidered by them as a Beotia. Profound diſquiſitions, and ſarcaſtic exultations, have been made concerning our foggy iſland; but the ſame fogs remain, while the fineſt compoſitions now enrich our language. The claſſics of England exhibit models of the pureſt taſte to literary Europe; but moral cauſes long impeded the progreſs of taſte in our country; when individuals want patronage, they often want genius; our monarchs have been torpid and parſimonious, but our pub-

lic

* So late as in 1771, a learned French writer compoſed a Diſſertation on the Phyſical Influence of Climates, to prove the ſuperiority of the French genius, in conſequence of a temperate climate!

lic at length has been rapid and magnificent. We may reſound our triumphs to the manes of Du Bos,* of Monteſquieu, and Winckelman, who have affirmed that we could have no genius for the fine arts, becauſe they informed the world that the ſenſibility of taſte was obſtructed by an obnoxious clime. Such are the ſentiments which have been echoed from one writer to another, till even ſome of our own have been pleaſed to calumniate themſelves.

Among many curious criticiſms of foreigners, I muſt not paſs ſilently Winckelman's notion concerning Milton. He tells us, that all the deſcriptions in the Paradiſe Loſt, excepting the amorous and delicate ſcenes of the primeval pair, are like well-painted gorgons, which reſemble each other, but are always frightful; and this he attributes

* This writer conceives, that a difference of talents in the ſame people, in different ages, is to be aſcribed to ſome *variation of their climate!*

attributes to the climate. But what is here attempted to be depreciated, every critic of taſte will conceive to be the terrible graces of a ſublime poeſy; a ſublimity (the grandeſt characteriſtic of a poet) unrivalled in modern or in ancient times. As the ſubject is peculiar, and of the moſt elevated nature, ſo it found in Milton a genius as peculiar, and faculties the moſt elevated. If the Engliſh Muſe has ſurpaſſed her ſiſters in loftineſs, ſhe yields not in the more delicate and ſweeter portions of her art. Of late we have excelled in pictureſque deſcription; the moſt pleaſing paintings of nature variegate the verſe of Thomſon, who, as a ſhrewd obſerver remarks, was born more northerly than Milton. Goldſmith has cultivated the ſame powers, and they have proved ſo attractive to the public taſte, that Engliſh verſe can now exhibit ſome of the moſt exchanting and the moſt vivid

ſcenery

ſcenery in poetry. The Muſe was conſidered to be under "a ſkiey influence;" but whenever a national impediment is removed, and Time, in every poliſhed nation, ſubverts ſuch cauſes, that people will not fail of equalling the efforts of thoſe who have been placed in happier circumſtances.

Men of genius ceaſe to be ſuch, when like the common people, they precipitate themſelves on one another with the ſtupid docility of a flock of ſheep, who follow the one who happens to be the foremoſt. Writers have yielded up their ſenſations and their reflections to this favourite theory. Spence has accounted for the turgidity of Lucan, on the principles of this ſyſtem. He ſays, "The ſwellings in his poem may be partly accounted for, perhaps, from his being *born* in *Spain*, and in that part of it which was *fartheſt removed* from Greece and Rome." But the following inſtance will parallel any literary

literary extravagance. When Dyer gave the "Fleece," he acquainted the world, to apologize for the defects of the poem, that "It was publiſhed under ſome *diſadvantages*; for many of it's *faults* muſt be imputed to the *air of a fenny country*, where I have been for the moſt part above theſe five years." Such criticiſms remind me of a couplet of the ingenious De Foe, whoſe good ſenſe appears alſo to have wandered wildly into theſe fancies. In one of his Political Poems, he ſays of his hero William,

> "Batavian climates nouriſhed him a-while,
> Too great a *genius* for ſo *damp* a ſoil."

It is evident, that when Milton firſt propoſed to himſelf the compoſition of his epic, this ſublime genius felt a full conviction of this prejudice of his age, reſpecting the influence of climate on the human mind. He tells us in one of his proſe works, that he intends to write an epic "out of our own ancient

cient ſtories; if there be nothing *adverſe* in our *climate*, or the fate of this age." At a more remote period, when he was near the concluſion of his immortal labour, he adorns theſe erroneous notions by the charms of his verſe, and lays a peculiar ſtreſs on the word *cold*. Theſe are the lines,

" ——————— higher argument
Remains; ſufficient of itſelf to raiſe
That name, unleſs an age too late, or *cold*
Climate, or years damp my intended wing."

Even Young, in " The Merchant," complains, that " his poetic vein *runs ſlow* in this cold climate."

The notion of this influence of the climate was indeed ſo univerſal in thoſe days, that Deſcartes feared that the warmth of the climate in France would too much exalt his imagination, and diſturb that temperate ſtate of the mind neceſſary for philoſophical diſcoveries. He therefore took refuge from the ſun, in Holland. All the froſt of the

the northern climates could never render his burning imagination tepid; the viſionary would have dreamt on a pillow of ſnow.

Such have been the imbecillities of great men; and on ſuch foundations reſted the brilliant edifice which the hand of Monteſquieu did not conſtruct, but only adorned. It is to be lamented that ſome ſuperior minds prefer the little vanity of temporary novelties to the infinite glory of enduring truths. Every error of this kind long links an additional fetter on the human mind, and half the wiſdom of man now conſiſts in deſtroying the chains of his own fabrication. Age ſucceeds to age, and the human mind, as it calculates it's genuine acquiſitions, wonders at the petty amount; while, if we ſcrutiniſe moſt of our former attempts, we perceive with a ſigh, that philoſophy has been more curious than knowing, more active than progreſſive, more

ſpecious

ſpecious than ſolid; that it has generally conſiſted in becoming familiar with the incongruous opinions of others, and having no opinions of our own; and that while we run after the capricious coquetry of a meretricious fancy, Truth has often paſt by, in ſober and unadorned beauty, unſolicited, undeſired, but rarely unſeen.

Let us view this topic in a more inſtructive manner. Ariſtotle, in his Politics, obſerves, that the northern nations, and generally all Europe, are naturally courageous and robuſt, but are improper for mental exertion, without powers for meditation, and without induſtry for the arts; on the contrary, the Aſiatics have great talents for works of genius, are inclined to reaſoning and meditation, and ſkilful in the invention and perfection of arts. The reverſe of all this, in the preſent age, is the truth. Ariſtotle drew this repreſentation from the exiſting

iſting ſcene; but had that acute mind happened to reflect on the powers which the *cuſtoms* and the *government* of a people have over the human mind, he had then perceived that not the froſts and ſnows of the northern realms made men addict themſelves to war, but that predatory genius which muſt prevail in a people, who were conſtantly diſtreſſed by poverty and famine. When a new civilization had taken place, and the ſeverities of the climate were mitigated by the beneficial influence of art and ſcience; when the deſcendants of theſe men employed their armaments in commerce, as well as in war; when their iron was plunged into the reluctant boſom of earth; when, in their cities, univerſities were erected, academies inſtituted, and the peaceful occupations of genius cheriſhed; then, while the ſame climate exiſted, the national characters became changed. Heroic and poliſhed

Greece

Greece and Rome are now barbarous and puſillanimous; and the gravity and ſuperſtition of the Spaniard, the politic and aſſaſſinating ſpirit of the Italian, the diligence and ſuppleneſs of the Scotchman, and the ſuſpiciouſneſs and profundity of the Engliſhman, are derived from their manners and governments. MAN is a mere imitative CREATURE, and the wiſe LEGISLATOR may be a powerful CREATOR.

It was once enquired why Paris and Toulouſe produced ſo many eminent lawyers. It was long attributed to the climate; till ſome reaſonable being diſcovered, that the univerſities of thoſe cities offered *opportunities* and *encouragements* for that *ſtudy* which others did not. The Germans have long been an injured literary nation. A taſte for ſcience and erudition having been diffuſed among that induſtrious people, they were conſtantly aſperſed by their lively neighbours, for invete-

rate dullneſs and ſterile imaginations. The eminent ſucceſs of the French in the Belles Lettres, placed the frightened genius of that nation in a voluntary ſecluſion; of late awakened from their ſtupor, they begin to rank high in polite letters; and although their productions have not yet attained that novelty of combination, which is the effect of long induſtry and multifarious compoſition, yet have they already produced ſome ſpirited and affecting works of imagination which can fear no rivals.

Men of genius, at London, or at Peterſburgh, in the retirement of their cabinet, if employed on the ſame topic, and equal in their acquiſitions, will think and write alike. The manners of a people occaſion ſome variations in national taſtes; there is an arbitrary and an ideal beautiful; or, in other words, a local and an univerſal ſenſation. The preſent ſyſtematiſers not

not having ſufficiently inveſtigated the cauſes of arbitrary or local ſenſations, in perceiving them, they at once referred them to the influence of CLIMATE, and not to the influence of GOVERNMENT.

From this and the two preceding eſſays, we may, perhaps, conclude, that it is with a people, as with an individual, and with an individual, as with a people. The human mind is indeed influenced not by climate, but by government; not by ſoils, but by cuſtoms; not by heat and cold, but by ſervitude and freedom. A happy education, an elegant leiſure, and a paſſion for glory, muſt form a great man; as an excellent government, an orderly liberty, and a popular felicity, muſt form a great people. But for theſe purpoſes, numerous conjunctures muſt ſucceed each other, which, in the poſition of human affairs, can be but rare; and to the preſent moment

no ſyſtem of education for the individual, or ſyſtem of government for the people, has been diſcovered, which can ſatisfy the philoſophical mind; a great people, like a great man, muſt therefore become a ſingularity; yet, as the characteriſtic of man is imitation, when one excels, there exiſts a contagion of excellence. Nouriſhed by perſevering induſtry, a diffuſion of emulation is propagated from individual to individual, and from nation to nation. Whenever, through moral cauſes, this emulation cannot exiſt, induſtry muſt be extinct, and excellence unacquired.

Industry is the vital principle of excellence; but we muſt not, therefore, ſuppoſe, that the advice of a preceptor, or the mandate of a ſovereign, can produce an inſtantaneous effect; there is a regular progreſſion in human affairs; and no power, leſs than omnipotence, could have produced

duced that ſingular operation of commanding light, and there was light. Miracles have departed from this philoſophic age; but INDUSTRY is left to us, which may be ſaid, to perform miracles.

On Novelty in Literature.

A MODERN reader, amidſt the abundance of his books, reſembles Xerxes, who, ſatiated with his pleaſures, promiſed a reward to him who ſhould allure by the invention of a new one. This capricious complaint only ſhews an abundance of objects, and a diſordered taſte; the fault is not in the pleaſures and the books, but in Xerxes and the Reader.

"All is ſaid," exclaims the lively Bruyere, but at the ſame moment, by his own admirable reflections, confutes the dreary ſyſtem he would eſtabliſh. An opinion of the exhauſted ſtate of literature, has been a popular prejudice of remote exiſtence; and an unhappy idea of a wiſe ancient, who, even in his day, laments, that "of books

books there is no end," has been tranſcribed by great authors, who, however, cannot be deemed great politicians. Perhaps, in the age of Solomon, readers were perplexed by periodical publications, and the Jewiſh Magazines might have been manufactured with as little ſkill as our own.

This opinion ſerves for the apology of the idle, and the conſolation of the diſappointed; but it is to be lamented that it extinguiſhes the ardour of the ingenious. Had not genius felt itſelf ſuperior to this malicious *dictum*, the world had wanted nearly all it's valued compoſitions. The popular notion of literary novelty is an idea more fanciful than exact. Of theſe unreflecting cenſurers, many are yet to learn that their admired originals are not ſuch as they miſtake them to be, either in the parts or the deſign of their works. We ſhall ſhew how the plans of the moſt original performances

have been borrowed; and of the thoughts of the moſt admired compoſitions, ſome readers are yet to be inſtructed that they are not wonderful diſcoveries, but only truths, of which themſelves felt the conviction, before the ingenuity of the author had arranged the intermediate and acceſſory ideas, by lucidly unfolding that confuſed ſentiment, which thoſe experience who are not accuſtomed to think with depth or accuracy.

Batteux employs a judicious figure, when he compares genius to the earth, which produces nothing, unleſs it has firſt received the ſeeds. This has no tendency to impoveriſh the talents of the artiſt, for it diſplays the ſource of exhauſtleſs treaſures, of infinite variations, and limits not leſs than the univerſe itſelf. There is an affinity in all the works of genius, becauſe they are imitations of nature; ſimilar they are, yet not the ſame; as all earths are terrene

rent ſubſtances, but their qualities are various. Novelty, in it's rigid acceptation, will not be found in any judicious production. I am not, therefore, ſurpriſed, at a literary incident which happened to a friend. To relieve the tedium of a temporary retirement, he took with him ſeven epic poems; he amuſed his ſolitude by comparing them with each other; and the reſult was, that he found how much each had been indebted to the others. The ſame incidents had been tranſplanted, and the ſame characters had aſſumed a different name; but every poet had his peculiar colouring and diſpoſition, and had created while he imitated.

Voltaire, as a critic of taſte, is of the greateſt authority. He looked on every thing as imitation. He obſerves that the moſt original writers borrowed one from another, and ſays that the inſtruction we gather from books, is like fire; we fetch it from our neighbours,

bours, kindle it at home, and communicate it to others, till it becomes the property of all. He has a curious paſſage, in which he traces ſome of the fineſt compoſitions to the fountain head; and the reader ſmiles when he perceives that they have travelled in regular ſucceſſion through China, India, Arabia, and Greece, to France and to England.

To the obſcurity of time are the ancients indebted for that originality in which they are imagined to excel. We know how frequently they accuſe each other; and to have borrowed copiouſly from preceding writers, was not conſidered criminal by ſuch illuſtrious authors as Plato and Cicero. It has been obſerved of the Eneid of Virgil, that not only little invention is diſplayed in the Incidents, for it unites the plan of the Iliad and the Odyſſey, but even as to many of the particular lines, and certainly is very deficient in the

the variety of it's characters.* But on writers ſo well known as the claſſical, we ſhall not dwell.

Our own early writers have not more originality than modern genius may aſpire to reach, To imitate and to rival the Italians and the French formed their devotion. Chaucer, Gower, and Gawin Douglas, were all ſpirited imitators, and frequently only maſterly tranſlators. Spenſer, the father of ſo many poets, is himſelf the child of the Auſonian Muſe; in borrowing the fancy of the Italian poetry, he unhappily adopted it's form. Shakeſpeare has liberally honoured many

* A learned friend has tranſlated and compared two fine pieces of the ancients. The Shield of Achilles in Homer, and the Shield of Hercules in Heſiod. We know ſo little of the time in which theſe two very ancient poets lived, that it is difficult to fix on the plagiariſt, or rather the imitator; but it is certain that one has borrowed conſiderably from the other; Heſiod's Shield of Hercules, is more poetical than Homer's Shield of Achilles; an argument which might have been in favour of the priority of Homer, if Homer, on the whole, had not been a far ſuperior poet.

many writers by unſparing imitations; he has availed himſelf of their ſentiments, their ſtyle, and their incidents. His Oberon was taken from a French Romance, and his Fairies are no more his own original invention, than the Sylphs are of Pope. Milton is inceſſantly borrowing from the poetry of his day. In the beautiful Maſk of Comus he preſerved all the circumſtances of the work he imitated. The Paradiſe Loſt is believed to have been conceived from a myſtery, and many of it's moſt ſtriking paſſages are taken from other poets. Taſſo opened for him the Tartarean Gulph; the ſublime deſcription of the bridge may be found in Sadi, who borrowed it from the Turkiſh theology; the paradiſe of fools is a wild flower, tranſplanted from the wilderneſs of Arioſto. Jonſon was the ſervile ſlave of his ancient maſters; and the rich poetry of Gray is a wonderful tiſſue, woven on the frames;

frames, and compoſed with the gold threads of others. To Cervantes we owe Butler; and the united abilities of three great wits, in their Martinus Scriblerus, could find no other mode of conveying their powers, but by imitating at once, Don Quixote and Monſieur Ouſle. Pope, like Boileau, had all the ancients and moderns in his pay; the contributions he levied were not the pillages of a bandit, but the taxes of a monarch. Swift is much indebted for the plans of his two very original performances. The Travels of Gulliver, to the Voyages of Cyrano de Bergerac, to the Sun and Moon; a writer, who, without the acuteneſs of Swift, has wilder flaſhes of fancy. Dr. Warton has obſerved many of his ſtrokes in Biſhop Godwin's Man in the Moon, who, in his turn, muſt have borrowed his work from Cyrano. The Tale of a Tub is an imitation of the once popular allegory of the three

inviſible

inviſible rings which a father bequeathed his children, and which were the Jewiſh, Chriſtian, and Mahommedan religions; as this tale is alſo of the Hiſtory of Fontenelle's Mero and Enegue. (Rome and Geneve). Dr. Feriar's Eſſay on the Imitations of Sterne might be conſiderably augmented; the Engliſhman may be tracked in many obſcure paths; in ſuch neglected volumes, as Le Moyen de Parvenir, and the Ana; beſides Burton and Martinus Scriblerus. Such are the writers, however, who imitate, but are inimitable!

We will now, quitting Britain, make a ſhort excurſion round the reſt of Europe, and viſit ſome of our neighbours, that we may not imagine they enjoy a ſuperiority over our own fellow citizens. Montaigne, with honeſt naiveté, compares his writings to a thread that binds the flowers of others; and that by inceſſantly pouring the waters

waters of a few good old authors into his ſieve, ſome drops fall upon his paper. The good old man elſewhere acquaints us with a certain ſtratagem of his own invention, conſiſting of his inſerting whole ſentences from the ancients, without acknowledgement, that the critics might blunder, by giving *Nazardes* to Seneca and Plutarch, while they imagined they tweaked his noſe. Petrarch, who is not the inventor of that tender poetry of which he is the model, and Boccaccio, called the father of Italian novels, have alike profited by a ſtudious peruſal of writers, who are now only read by thoſe who have more curioſity than taſte. Boiardo has imitated Pulci, and Arioſto, Boiardo. The madneſs of Orlando Furioſo, though it wears, by it's extravagance, a very original air, is only imitated from Sir Launcelot in the old Romance of Mort Arthur, with which the late Mr. Warton obſerves,

ſerves, it agrees in every leading circumſtance. Taſſo has imitated the Iliad, and enriched his poem with epiſodes from the Eneid. It is curious to obſerve, that even Dante, wild and original as he appears, when he meets Virgil in the Inferno, warmly expreſſes his gratitude for the many fine paſſages for which he was indebted to his works, and on which he ſays he had "long meditated." Moliere and La Fontaine are conſidered to poſſeſs as much originality as any of the French writers; yet the learned Menage calls Moliere "un grand et habile picoreur," and Boileau tells us, that La Fontaine borrowed his ſtyle and matter from Marot and Rabelais, and took his ſubjects from Boccaccio, Poggius, and Arioſto. Nor was the eccentric Rabelais the inventor of moſt of his burleſque narratives, and he is a very cloſe imitator of Folengo, the inventor of the macaronic poetry, and not a little

little indebted to the old *Facezie* of the Italians. Indeed Marot, Villon, as well as thoſe we have noticed, profited by the authors, anterior to the age of Francis I. Bruyere incorporates whole paſſages of Publius Syrus in his work, as the tranſlator of the latter abundantly ſhews. To the Turkiſh ſpy was Monteſquieu beholden for his Perſian Letters, and a numerous croud are indebted to Monteſquieu. Corneille made a liberal uſe of Spaniſh literature; and the pure waters of Racine flowed from the fountains of Sophocles and Euripides.

Having thus traced that vein of imitation which runs through the productions of our greateſt authors,* it remains to aſcertain an accurate notion of literary novelty.

* Marville compares ſome of the firſt writers to bankers, who are rich with the aſſembled fortunes of individuals, and would be often ruined, were they too hardly drawn on.

Denina's little book on the Revolutions of Literature, is formed on this principle; that there being a great uniformity in nature, when the perfection of thoſe arts, which expreſs the paſſions, is at length acquired, nature becomes exhauſted; and that at this period, to ſucceed in poetry or in eloquence, it would require either to extend nature, or to create new paſſions, which are alike impoſſible. If this were true, literary novelty might be, in the preſent refinement of the Belles Lettres, a hopeleſs project. We muſt, therefore, controvert this hypotheſis, or burn our pens.*

What is a new thought? The queſtion has been reſolved by Boileau. It is not, ſays he, what the ignorant imagine;

* Il Diſcorſo ſopra le vicende della Litteratura of Denina, is a curious ſubject for literary inveſtigators; but I think that the book ſupports the author, rather than the author the book. Whatever he ſays concerning Engliſh literature, is very deficient in information, and exhibits ſome of thoſe abſurdities into which foreigners have fallen concerning our authors.

gine; that is, a thought which no one ever conceived, or could have poſſibly conceived. On the contrary, it is a thought that might have occurred to any one, but that ſomebody has firſt expreſſed. It is what every one *thinks*, but is ſaid in a lively, fine, and new *manner*. Pope, no doubt, borrowed his definition of wit, or genius, from this remark. It is, as he ſays,

"What oft was *thought*, but ne'er ſo well *expreſſed*."

It is, perhaps, with writing as with ſhooting; the art conſiſts in the *aim* of the ſportſman, but the objects are always the ſame. Good ſenſe has been ſo in all ages, ſays Pope elſewhere, who, perhaps, had more good ſenſe than any poet. If we analyſe the moſt ſtriking paſſages of our moſt original writers, we ſhall find that the naked idea had nothing uncommon. The fineſt thoughts derive their beauty from the glow and colouring of imagination. I have ſeen a MS. by a friend

of great taſte, where, in examining and comparing the natural ſentiments of two dialogues of vulgar courtſhip, in the Exmoor dialect, with congenial and ſimilar ideas in poetical language, he has diſcovered that the ground-work of the human mind is always the ſame; and that all men think alike, but expreſs themſelves very differently. This eſſay, probably, only intended as a literary amuſement, may, however, be made to elucidate a philoſophical truth.

Hence the moſt forcible paſſages of Shakeſpeare, are only delightful or energetic expreſſions of our own feelings. Great writers muſt, therefore, bear an affinity with each other; and will eagerly adopt the images, the ſentiments, and the very expreſſions of a kindred genius. We may account, on this principle, for thoſe ſimilar paſſages which we meet with in different works, although we are certain that

no

no connection exiſted between the writers. Hence ſometimes an Engliſhman finds in Corneille, an expreſſion which he exclaims is worthy of Shakeſpeare; and a Frenchman diſcovers in Shakeſpeare, a ſentiment which he knows to be equal to the eloquence of Corneille.

It would, therefore, appear, that there is a MANNER IN EXPRESSION, which may impart novelty to literary compoſition; and I add alſo, that there is another MANNER OF CHARACTER, which every writer of genius exhibits.

The Italians deſcribe a certain ſenſation by their *un non ſò che*; the French by their *je ne ſçai quoi*; and we frequently ſay "*a certain ſomething.*" The foreign writers have compoſed a great deal concerning this quality; and perhaps they have obſcured, what is not obſcure in itſelf; for what is this occult ſenſation but MANNER? It accompanies every intereſting object; it is

the inexpreſſible charm which creates ſympathy, or the unknown ſomething which produces antipathy. Do we not obſerve the moſt eſſential truths, on the moſt intereſting topics, enfeebled, and even rendered repulſive? And do we not ſometimes admire the moſt trivial objects, when they are touched with all the felicity of manner? It ariſes from the abſence or the uſe of this prominent quality, which beſtows novelty on the moſt familiar, and delight on the moſt arid topics. The French and Italians have a ſpecies of writing almoſt peculiar to themſelves. It is called by the former, *Rajeuniſſement*, and by the latter, *Refaccimento*. This is nothing but a rejuveneſcence of their ancient authors, ſuch as are the verſions by Dryden and Pope, of ſome of Chaucer's Tales. Every one is not equally ſucceſsful in this employment; and writers who poſſeſs a happineſs of manner, have diſplayed

in

in theſe works it's full force; they have given, by maſter-touches, all the pleaſure the originals once gave. In the hands of inferior writers, the ſame thoughts have been as vigilantly preſerved, but not as attractively. Several works of importance might be noticed, which could never be peruſed in the manner of their original authors; but ſince they have been re-written by men of genius, every one peruſes them. *Manner* is the firſt acquirement of genius; it renders a ſonnet more precious than a long poem, and has made ſome authors more celebrated for ten pages, than others who in vain have written ten volumes. Obſerve in two of the moſt popular French writers, a great contraſt of manner; Voltaire is a wit, and takes us by ſurpriſe; Rouſſeau is an orator, and inſinuates his ſoul into our own; one points his poliſhed epigrams, and the other ſteals on us by his pathetic ſentiments; our mind is

the aim of Voltaire, but we yield our heart to Rouſſeau. It is this manner which enchants in Addiſon, pleaſes in Melmoth, and ſooths in Hawkeſworth; which ſparkles in the brilliant periods of Shafteſbury, riſes into majeſty in the grand tones of Bolingbroke, and awes in the ſolemn cadencies of Johnſon.*

Another

* This *manner*, in every great writer, has not eſcaped obſervation. The quotations may gratify literary curioſity. The elegant author of Fitzoſborne's Letters, has a little Eſſay on Grace, in which, after confeſſing the difficulty of expreſſing an idea, when language does not ſupply us with proper words, he cloſes by ſaying, that "Sir William Temple may be conſidered as the firſt proſe author who introduced a graceful *manner* into our language."

Addiſon, in the 160 Spectator, ſays, "I believe we may obſerve, that very few writers make an extraordinary figure in the world, who have not *ſomething* in their way of *thinking* or *expreſſing* themſelves, that is peculiar to them, and *entirely their own*."

Rouſſeau the poet, in his Epiſtle to Marot, obſerves of great writers,

"Chacun d'eux a SA BEAUTE PRECISE,
Qui le diſtingue, et forme ſa deviſe."

It is ſingular, that De Foe, in his Eſſay on Projects, notices a *manner in writing*. Perhaps he borrowed the notion from the French critics; for it would be difficult to conceive what idea he and the writers of the laſt century formed of it, ſince no one then appears to have had a peculiar characteriſtic, or employed any of thoſe artifices of compoſition which conſtitute a *manner*.

Another ſource of literary novelty may be derived from IMITATION. A ſervile imitation is inimical to the progreſs of art, but nothing is more neceſſary to preſerve the refinement of art, than a frequent recurrence to it's models. To literary echoes, we may apply the ſenſible obſervation of Philip of Macedon, made to one who prided himſelf with imitating the notes of the nightingale; "I prefer the nightingale herſelf." We muſt firſt learn to follow our predeceſſors, that we may reach them, and if we have the adroitneſs, we may then outſtrip them; a vulgar mind can only copy, a ſuperior mind in copying, always becomes original. Among literary faſhions, there once prevailed the cuſtom of imitating Cicero, it was carried to a laughable extravagance, and the correſpondence of men of letters was often long interrupted, becauſe ſome would require three or four months to write a letter

of

of three or four pages.* Servile imitation is cenſured by the very expreſſion; that to which I now allude, is of a very different kind, and I proceed to deſcribe it.

This

* Theſe ſcholars were denominated *Ciceronians*, and as we have ſtill remaining ſome of this claſs of pedants, I think the reader will not be diſpleaſed to have their character exhibited, it is ſaid with nearly as much truth, as ridicule.

"It was laughable to obſerve thoſe pale and melancholy viſages, deprive themſelves of every pleaſure, fly from the ſociety of the living, as if they were themſelves already dead, bury themſelves in the bier of their ſtudy, and refrain from every kind of reading, except the works of Cicero, with as religious a care as Pythagoras abſtained from the uſe of fleſh. Their libraries were only diverſified by the different editions of the works of Cicero. Their hiſtories were only thoſe of his life; and their epics only frigid narratives of his conſulſhip; the paintings and drawings in their galleries, were only his portraits and actions. They had his head engraven on their ſeals, as well as on their hearts. By day and by night Cicero was the only object of their enquiries and converſations. They preferred the honour of collecting certain words, and arranging a round and nicely-cadenced period, to the performance of the moſt generous action. When at length, their painful vigils had attenuated their bodies with illneſs, they died contented, ſince they had augmented the number of the martyrs of Cicero, and appeared in their laſt agony, to be leſs pleaſed with the hope of the aſpect of God, than of the eternal preſence of this demon of eloquence."

Such is the portrait Colletet has drawn of theſe falſe imitators of Cicero!

This imitation is peculiar to an age of taſte. It is an enthuſiaſm caught from the inceſſant ſtudy of the maſters in compoſition; a ſenſibility and verſatility of taſte, which receives the *manners* of every writer, and which reproduces their intermingled graces, in it's own compoſitions. A writer who poſſeſſes this magical power, combines the varieties of his predeceſſors, and without being one of them, is all of them. He rarely finds a reader worthy of himſelf, for to reliſh ſuch an author, requires a delicacy and perception equal to his own, and it is leſs difficult to taſte the mere manneriſt, who has only one character, than the writer who combines ſeveral. A writer of this deſcription is indefatigable in the arrangement of his compoſition. A cultured imagination heightens his natural feelings, and in every part he exhibits the lighter graces and glowing

ing ſtrokes of a brilliant art. He beſtows a freſhneſs and bloom on whatever has been frequently touched. No thought appears feeble or vulgar, becauſe it is inveſted with an elegant dreſs, and an eaſy air. The effects of ſuch a compoſition are not immediately perceived, for much of the art of refinement conſiſts in concealing, and not in obtruding. It is a ſilent beauty that ſteals on inſenſibly; it is Venus gradually riſing from the ſea, wave falls upon wave, beauty ſucceeds to beauty, till the whole enchantment of the figure is revealed.

A writer of this claſs catches inſpiration, in his ſolitary cloſet, from the labours of others. He is the ſtudent who haſtens to Rome to meditate at the feet of it's ſtatues; he is the architect who combines in the edifices with which he adorns his native city, thoſe

graces

graces, which his eye had appropriated in foreign countries.*

The able vindicator of Milton againſt the infamous Lauder, has this admirable obſervation on the preſent ſubject. "There may be ſuch a thing as an original work without invention; and a writer may be an imitator of others without plagiariſm." Among painters it is not only permitted, but even applauded, to infert a figure, or groupe

* Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus, who has written with ſuch attic ſenſibility on literary elegancies, compares the brilliant and flowery ſtyle, in which ſuch writers often excel, to a living and limpid ſtream, which ever flows, and ever with the ſame facility; to a changeable ſilk, which exhibits at every glance all the delicacies of ſhades; and to a ſplendid painting, in which the colours ſo happily blend, and ſweetly melt into each other.

The poliſhed ear of the ancients was ſo accuſtomed to whatever was finiſhed, and perhaps the felicity of their language, firſt gave them a taſte for ſuch exquiſite refinements, that they would conſume hours in turning, and returning, a period. Of Plato it is recorded, that he re-wrote twenty times, the ſimple expreſſion of "yeſterday I deſcended into the Pyræus," before he could ſatisfy his delicacy. Cicero balanced the members of his periods, like notes in muſic, and reſerved for their cloſes, that harmonious pomp of words, which, by the Greeks, was ſtyled, "magnificence of ſound."

groupe of figures, borrowed from another artiſt. Raphael, no more than Pope, paſſed over a happy hint, or heſitated to ſeize on whatever he found to be exquiſite. I know of no reaſon why writers are to be leſs favoured than painters.

Literary novelty appears, therefore, poſſible to be imparted to works of taſte, while there ſhall be preſerved a *manner in expreſſion*, a *manner in character*, and a ſkilful *imitation*. But two obſervations remain to be made; that there are *a falſe novelty*, and *exhauſted turns of expreſſion*.

The popular kind of novelty is gratified by irregular ſallies of the imagination. To this inceſſant demand of the taſteleſs public, many ingenious and great writers have fallen the victims. We have too frequently, in our country, pardoned eccentricity and incorrectneſs, for ſome irregular coruſcations of genius. An affectation of

novelty

novelty has often been calamitous to great minds. It has been a fertile ſource in ſcience, of pernicious paradoxes, and in literature, of monſtrous inventions. Pere Hardouin, known for his ſtrange opinions, was uſed to ſay, to excuſe them, that he did not riſe at four every morning to repeat what others had ſaid. He might have roſe much later, and ſtill have been as ridiculous, for to follow the extravagancies of an idle imagination, has great facility. Camoens, in his Luſiad, by a mixture of the fabulous deities with the chriſtian theology, and Davenant, in his Gondibert, by the invention of a plan, repugnant to Homer and nature, are eminent inſtances. The temporary taſte of a vicious age, has been fatal to genius, and we have loſt a fine poet in Cowley. To ſurpriſe is the great aim of art; but it is to be remembered, that ſurpriſe is alike excited by beauty and deformity.

We

We are ſurpriſed at the ſoftened graces of a Raphael; we are ſurpriſed at the fantaſtical ſtrokes of a Chineſe painter. But which, inſinuate themſelves into our hearts, aſſume at every inſpection new charms, and create an enchanting and eternal deluſion?

That the *turns of expreſſion* may be exhauſted, is felt moſt in an age of literary refinement. Some of our happieſt modes of diction occur at length ſo frequently, that their beauty is loſt in their familiarity. At this period, it is, that the manners of a nation, are luxurious and refined, and their defects are communicated to their ſtyle. To invent new thoughts, is now moſt rare, and to invent new expreſſions, is now moſt hazardous. Perhaps letters are verging to their decline, and can only be preſerved pure in the care of thoſe few, who retain a paſſion for the ſimplicity of their ancient authors, and at the ſame time, a taſte for the refine-

ments

ments of the moderns. Such is the uſual hiſtory of the progreſs of letters; whether this deſcribes our preſent ſtate, I would not decide, fearful leſt from the inveſtigation we might deduce a concluſion not favourable to our future efforts. When the nation becomes more virtuous, we ſhall have a more unblemiſhed ſtyle.

Let it be ſufficient to obſerve, that while we deviate not too widely from the models of art, novelty may be communicated to our productions, and an originality be impreſſed on the moſt common objects. I give an inſtance. Equeſtrian ſtatues are commonly raiſed on a poliſhed maſs of marble, and ſurrounded by allegorical figures. When Falconet was invited to Peterſburgh, to form ſuch a ſtatue of Peter the Great, he repreſented the Emperor on a fiery courſer. This idea an inferior ſculptor might have ſeiſed. But it remained for this artiſt to throw over the perfor-

mance the luſtre of genius. He has placed the horſe in the act of leaping from a rude, unhewed rock. Here we ſee expreſſed the ſublime genius of Peter and the artiſt. Give an ordinary ſculptor the ſame marble. Patient induſtry will poliſh the limbs, trace with minute beauty the hairs of the mane, while Peter, encumbered by an allegorical pomp, will ſtand unnoticed. While genius can give a *new attitude*, it will not want for *new expreſſion*; and it is one ſource of that NOVELTY, which now ſeduces and captivates in the productions of art. The art of writing is the art of exciting powerful ſenſations.

On the Influence of the Female Character in Politics and Religion.

AMONG the various arguments deduced in favour of an equality in the intellectual faculties of the ſexes, I know not if it has been remarked, that there are certain powers, which, to be more perfect, require that ſtation in ſociety occupied by the fair. I ſhall add alſo, that any deficiency in other qualities, has been often compenſated by the ſeductions of their perſonal charms.

We ſhall perceive upon inveſtigation, that in religion and in politics, their influence has been infinitely greater, than appears in hiſtorical records; and it is one great objection to the verity of hiſtory, that the female

character rarely makes any figure in ſcenes which, by ſome other means, we often diſcover to have been planned by females with inventive felicity, and conducted with peculiar addreſs. We are apt to be ſurpriſed when we contemplate ſome of the greateſt revolutions, that they derived their origin from the fair; that a government or a religion have been eſtabliſhed by a female, and that while an invaſion takes place, a monarch is aſſaſſinated, or an inquiſition erected, the motive power of this vaſt machine, is a little unperceived ſpring, touched and played upon by the dexterity of a woman.

That the female character may excel the maſculine ability, in what is termed a knowledge of the world, and that there is a ſexual diſtinction in this not contemptible ſcience, is a fact, which an obſerver may diſcover in his private circle. Bruyere is a character more extraordinary among men, than

it would be among women; for I am perſuaded, that there are many female Bruyeres not accuſtomed to write down their obſervations, and pourtray the characters of their acquaintance. Women, of even a mediocrity of talent, excel in the knowledge of their circle; and we may account for this curious circumſtance, on the principle of their ſtationary ſituation in ſociety, where their opportunities for obſervation are more frequent, and where their perception becomes more exact, by an attention, which, though frequently interrupted by it's vivacity, is never entirely ſuſpended. I cannot affirm that they view diſtantly, or penetrate deeply. Their eye is a pleaſing microſcope, which detects the minuteſt ſtroke, if placed near, though incapable of tracing an object remotely. Many experience, and ſome acknowledge, what Rouſſeau relates of his Thereſa. This woman, whom he de-

ſcribes otherwiſe as heavy and dull, afforded him excellent advice in the moſt trying occaſions. "Often" (ſays he) "in Switzerland, in England, and in France, amidſt the cataſtrophes I found myſelf, ſhe ſaw what I did not ſee myſelf; ſhe afforded me the beſt counſels to follow, and extricated me from dangers in which I blindly precipitated myſelf."

If, therefore, the female diſplays a ſuperior acuteneſs, derivable from the peculiarity of her ſituation, thoſe authoreſſes who appear jealous of certain privileges attached to the wandering and active ſex, cannot be deemed as the able advocates of their own; becauſe if woman (from the natural feebleneſs of whoſe organs is derived her beauty) were capable of exerting the ſame corporeal vigour as man, yet by becoming his rival, ſhe would not only loſe that feminine ſweetneſs, that amiable debility, and that retiring

modeſty

modeſty which lend ſo much eloquent perſuaſion to her actions, but what would not be compenſated by this violent and unnatural change, ſhe would loſe her actual poſition in the ſocial order which imparts her preſent ſuperiority, by enabling her to detect the ſecret foibles of man. To this, her ſtationary ſituation, I would attribute her acknowledged ſuperiority in converſation, and in epiſtolary compoſition. To both, the female imparts a peculiar delicacy, and a charm of eaſe, which maſters of ſtyle can neither imitate nor rival. Theſe excellencies conſiſt in a volubility of happy expreſſion, and a choice of ſprightly ideas; on the boſom of ſociety the female genius is firſt nurtured; the human ſcene becomes her ſchool; and hence ſhe derives this facility of language, and this livelineſs and ſelection of ideas.

A more obvious advantage in the female character, is that ſuſceptibility

of feeling, or facility of imagination, which, without doubt, is peculiar to the irritable delicacy of their fibres. The heart is the great province of the female; if we would attract their regard, we muſt learn to reach the heart; all their finer qualities are ſo many ſenſations of the heart; and it is the heart which imbues with it's ſoftneſs, their every excellence. Their favourite amuſements are works of imagination and taſte, not of memory and reaſon; their logic conſiſts not of arguments, but of ſentiments; and I think that ſome ladies of extreme refinement, can put as much fancy, and exert as rich an imagination, in the ornaments of a favourite dreſs, as the poet employs in his moſt florid deſcriptions.

In every ſurrounding object they expreſs their love of the beautiful; their moſt uſeful inſtruments have a character of delicacy; and in a word, women would effeminate even the roughneſs

of

of ſteel, and the ſolidity of wood; man is ſubjugated by theſe adventitious elegancies, and the fair, love to ſee that beauty admired in inanimate objects, which they know muſt be much more in themſelves.

I am not ſurpriſed, that in all nations, civiliſed or rude, whenever ſuperſtition prevailed, the female character has been regarded as an inſtrument of the divinity. That peculiar animation which vivifies their lively perceptions, has been conſidered as ſomething ſupernatural, and we can eaſily conceive that the afflatus of prophecy muſt ever have diſplayed a more touching illuſion in the agitated and picturesque countenance of a woman, than in the more hard and labouring viſage of a prophet; I conceive that the Grecian Pythia, the Roman Sybil, and the Pythoniſſa of the Hebrews, muſt have communicated a more celeſtial inſpiration with their copious treſſes

treſſes luxuriating on their palpitating boſom, their vivacious eyes, and their ſnowy arms, than even a paſſionate Iſaiah, or a weeping Jeremiah.

But to hiſtory, and not to declamation, I appeal. If we throw a philoſophical glance on it's inſtructive records, and have the diſcernment to read what often is not in hiſtory, we ſhall obſerve that the female character has ever had a ſingular influence on moſt of the great characters and great events of human life. One of the moſt favourite portions of the hiſtoric art, with hiſtorians, is an elaborate delineation of the characters of monarchs. We ſhould comprehend theſe much better if we were acquainted with thoſe of the Queens. Many important reſolutions of ſtate councils have been firſt made in the royal bed. It is an obſervation of the judicious Du Freſnoy, that a Queen has an influence on the King her huſband, and the King her

her ſon. And would it be difficult to ſhew, that if the whole affairs of government depend on a Miniſter, he would be impregnable againſt the attacks of a miſtreſs? A perſon muſt be very ignorant of ſecret hiſtory, whoſe memory cannot at this moment place, in ridiculous and humiliating attitudes, ſome of the moſt illuſtrious ſtateſmen.*

The

* I ſhall notice two very eminent ſtateſmen. Cardinal Richelieu, to gain the affections of the Dutcheſs de Chevreuſe at their private interviews, viſited her in the moſt finical dreſs. Rejecting his ſcarlet robes and ſacred pantoufles, his eminence wore a faſhionable coat, an enormous plume, a long rapier, and tight pumps. The Dutcheſs hated and ridiculed the Cardinal, the Miniſter, and the Coxcomb; but at that moment through him ſhe conducted innumerable intrigues within and without the kingdom. Read Plutarch's Life of Cicero, and you may obſerve that his wife Terentia was not leſs concerned than the orator and ſtateſman, in the moſt ſtriking events of his public life. When Cicero was perplexed to know in what manner he ſhould treat the conſpirators of Catiline, Terentia incenſed him againſt them, and invented an ingenious prodigy to fix the vacillation of his agitated mind, and cauſe him to act with an energy he otherwiſe had wanted. The origin of the enmity between Cicero and Clodius was owing to the jealouſy of Terentia, who knew that his ſiſter Clodia was deſirous of marrying Cicero. She therefore inſtigated him to attack Clodio. By the confeſſion of Cicero himſelf, it appears that Terentia was ever more ready to interfere

The moſt celebrated men have been influenced by the female's powers; nor has that influence terminated in the domeſtic circle, but animating the moſt complicated intrigues it has impelled, and decided on the fate of a people.

Saint Evremond and Cheſterfield, who, to the practical knowledge of life, united the wider theories of meditation, have expreſſed themſelves very forcibly on female influence at court. A French author has diſcovered, that under the regency of Anne of Auſtria, every thing was conducted by women, and he calls this, a ſingular epocha. The ſame happened under our own Anne. But all this is ſo far from being ſingular, that I would enquire what epocha has not been governed

terfere in his public tranſactions, than to communicate her domeſtic affairs to him. It is not in a note we can adduce ſimilar inſtances; but almoſt every Richelieu will be found to have had his Chevreuſe, and every Cicero his Terentia.

verned by women? I confeſs that the female character has as ſeldom been heard on the public ſcene, as the prompter of a theatre; or as rarely been viſible as the ſcene-ſhifters. But miſerable were that philoſophy which confounds inviſibility with non-exiſtence; the female character, like ſome other objects, derives all it's influence from concealment; in politics, woman is terrible, not in the raſh imbecillity of the ſtorm, but in the ſudden exploſion of the mine.

Ancient and contemporary hiſtory will ever abound with multifarious inſtances of this kind; and I ſhall juſt obſerve, that even in the ſevere republics of Greece and Rome, the female character had the ſame influence; the celebrated confeſſion of Themiſtocles remarkably confirms this obſervation. That little boy (ſaid he, pointing to his ſon) is the arbiter of Greece; for he governs his mother, his mother governs

governs me, I govern the Athenians, and the Athenians govern the Grecians. Themiſtocles was a profound and honeſt philoſopher. I have no doubt that even the modern republic of France muſt experience the ſame deſpotiſm, and that the fierceſt republican muſt be contented to remain in his ſabine farm, unleſs he ſubmits to addreſs ſome proud and ambitious woman; for whatever the French may imagine reſpecting their ſalique law, they have been more governed by females, than any other nation.

A learned friend obſerves, that theſe obſervations tend to prove, that women command men, becauſe men *love* women; but I take leave to add, that women command men frequently, becauſe men *fear* women. The exceſs of their ſenſibility is obſervable in all their great paſſions; and the ancients appear to inſtruct us, when they picture their furies, as well as their graces,

graces, in the forms of women.* From the ſame enthuſiaſm is derived their excellent, as well as their execrable qualities; their ſenſations admit of no cold mediocrity; they are at once, more or leſs, than human; they liſten to the voice of adulation, till they ſink into idiotiſm; or they are animated by a fervour of glory, till they are elevated into heroines.†

When the love of glory warms the ſenſitive ſoul of a female, ſhe is, perhaps, actuated by a ſtronger impulſe than that which directs our leſs delicate feelings. A being agitated by a tumultuous and inflamed imagination, experiencing

* It is an obſervation by Addiſon, that "the fair ſex are always the beſt or the worſt part of the world."

† Swift has caught this idea of female ſenſibility, and alludes to it in his Poem of Cadenus and Vaneſſa. The lines are the following ones.

"When Miſs delights in her ſpinnet,
A fidler may a fortune get;
A blockhead with melodious voice,
In boarding ſchools can have his choice.
And oft the dancing maſter's art
Climbs from the toe to touch the heart.
In learning let a nymph delight,
The pedant gets a miſtreſs by't."

experiencing ſenſations, perhaps, unknown to us, half conſcious of her debility, yet conducted by a daring pride; burning to reach that *beau idéal* which we ſo liberally beſtow on her; to what height is ſuch a being not capable of ſoaring? Even her deficiencies become ſo many tender graces, and her very failings extort our applauſe. Some men of the greateſt genius have been remarkable for their extreme vanity, if we thus muſt term their love of glory; the ſame paſſion exiſts in all it's force in every great female character; and it is a doubt with me, whether genius receives the characteriſtics of female ſenſibility, or whether extreme female ſenſibility reſembles genius. It is, perhaps, a nice ſhade to diſcriminate; but it is evident that this glowing ſentiment is derived from an amplitude of ſoul. To what, but this paſſion for glory, can we attribute their partiality for men of genius?

nius? Their remarkable attachment to officers, has formed a ſevere accuſation againſt the ſex; ſome have conſidered that it proceeded from their timid diſpoſitions, which make them regard with fondneſs the protecting arm of a brave man; but a ſenſible female has lately cenſured it, becauſe ſhe ſuppoſes that as theſe triflers are remarkable for their frivolous accompliſhments, and a deficiency in mental ability, they are therefore more on a level with women, than any other claſs of men. The obſervation will oftener be true than falſe; yet we may ſometimes attribute the female's paſſion for military men, to her violent love of glory. The obſervation is Bayle's but it is given by Fielding, who at the ſame time adduces the ſentiment of the heroine of the Odyſſey, who "aſſigns the glory of her huſband as the only ſource of her affection towards him."

Women have been alſo frequently accuſed of an imprudent diſcovery of their concerns; but an important intereſt engages their ſilence. No great enterpriſe will ſuffer, becauſe a ſenſible female unites her aid, and ſtimulates by her vivacity, the torpid prudence of men. We want not for examples to prove that ſome of the greateſt conſpiracies have been confided to women; foſtered by their care, and accompliſhed by their zeal. Du Freſnoy, a very learned reſearcher of hiſtory, has ſhewn that ſeveral great conſpiracies have failed, becauſe they were not confided to females; and has adduced numerous evidences, to prove, that whenever they were employed, they conferred ſucceſs on the enterpriſe. I am perſuaded, that a female may not only have the faculty of preſerving a ſecret, but alſo the dexterity of inventing what is worthy of being kept ſecret, at the coſt of life.

Such

Such has been the influence of the female character in politics; nor has it been leſs apparent in religion.

The ladies have been more cloſely connected with religion than perhaps they are aware of. A new religion is congenial to their diſpoſitions, and not merely for it's novelty. There is a luxuriancy of fancy, and a progreſs to ideal perfection, which every new religion diſplays; it is honourable to their finer ſenſibilities, that they are ever the firſt to incline to what appears ſo theoretically beautiful. It is not quite ſo honourable to thoſe, who pretending to ſuperior ſanctity, and even to inſpiration, have for the promotion of the ſyſtem they wiſhed to eſtabliſh, artfully adopted the ideas moſt dangerous to the imaginations of women, and taught the love of God, according to the art of Ovid.

That the earlieſt propagators of new dogmas have had recourſe to theſe in-

viſible, yet powerful wheels, in the machine of human nature, I mean women, is not to be controverted. Let the fair ſex be inveigled, and the religion is eſtabliſhed; a woman at leaſt can bring her huſband, a miſtreſs the prime miniſter, a queen the ſovereign.

It is a curious obſervation made by ſome, who pretend to ſingular penetration in the ſcience of human nature, that the chriſtian religion was greatly indebted to the patronage and the ſenſations of the ſex. Voltaire, who is not ſo ſuperficial as his adverſaries would make us believe, ſays, that half of Europe owes it's chriſtianity to women, and Gibbons, who certainly had vaſt erudition, in his account of the monaſtic life, after having mentioned the ſeveral inducements for entering into this unnatural ſtate, with more truth than politeneſs, adds, "that theſe religious motives acted more forcibly on the infirm minds of females."

It

It is certain, that from the influence of the female character, we derive nearly all the prominent events of religious hiſtory. The firſt dominions of the Pope, and conſequently the origin of the papal power, are the gifts of a lady. Gregory VII. had ſo lively an intereſt in the heart of the Counteſs Mathilda, that ſhe made a donation of all her ſtates to the holy ſee. Inſtigated by the eloquence of St. Jerome, the illuſtrious Paula forſook Rome, retired to the ſacred village of Bethlem, and founded ſeveral monaſteries. To Torquemada, who had taken poſſeſſion of the mind of Iſabella of Spain (the beſt Spaniſh eſtate he could have ſeiſed on) the world is indebted for the cruel inquiſition. And in a word, chriſtianity in England is derived from a French princeſs, who having married Ethelbert, firſt ſtipulated for the free exerciſe of her religion, and ſoon had ſuch influence on her huſband, as to

chriſtianiſe his idolatrous Saxons. To conclude in the words of the poet,

And goſpel light, firſt beamed from Bullen's eyes.
Pope.

It is thus that the female character has ever had an inviſible influence on two of the moſt important branches of human events, politics and religion. A ſuperiority of talent, in one reſpect, has produced this unvaried reſult. This talent conſiſts in a great knowledge of man, a ſuſceptibility of impreſſion, and a peculiarity of ſituation. In the domeſtic circle, the female is inceſſantly occupied in diſintangling, or combining the paſſions ſhe obſerves or ſhe inflames. Her ſedentary life, and her quietneſs of mind, are little interrupted by that variety of purſuits to which the buſier ſex are devoted. Her circle is her empire; her commands, ſays Rouſſeau, are her careſſes, and her threats are her tears. Incapable, perhaps, of patient deſigns, her plans

plans are rapidly conceived, and often fail, if they require a tedious proceſs of elaborate events. They are not deeply laid, but are adapted for temporary effect. The female attends to thoſe minute particulars, often unperceived, and generally careleſsly conſidered as unworthy of an elevated mind, but which often adroitly managed, give a new and ſudden turn to important objects; and ſhe appears to know much better than man, that little paſſions can produce great effects. For ſurrounding objects her perceptions are vivid; but ſhe cannot, with the preſcient eye of philoſophy, diſtinctly trace objects at a remote period. Her intellectual arithmetic can calculate as far as days and months, but extends not to years. She excels man in obtaining a preſent purpoſe; her invention is prompt, her boldneſs happy, and her execution facile; manly perſeverance proceeds with a cautious,

firm, and gradual progreſſion. Let us conſider the ſexual advantages. The female can excite by legitimate eulogiums, and can correct by ſevere panegyrics; ſhe makes man exult or bluſh; ſhe can allure by a ſmile, ſhe can enchant by a touch, ſhe can ſubdue by her endearments. She overturns, or produces in an hour, the labour of years. She has ever ſomething reſerved for the laſt effort; ſomething which has often degraded wiſdom into folly, and elevated folly into wiſdom, and which, while it can render activity torpid, imparts action to indolence.*

On

* If this eſſay ſhould by ſome be conſidered as one of the numerous adulations of the ſex, this note will undeceive them. I am perſuaded of the influence they have had in religion and in politics, and I attribute it to that ſtationary point they hold in ſociety; but let it be obſerved, that they only obtain this faſcination in the worſt ſtages of ſociety; in the ages of luxury and licentiouſneſs. As we approach ſimplicity, they loſe their degrading power; and this influence over men is little to their credit, becauſe men at that moment have degenerated from the higher virtues. The very reſpect we pay to women is an artificial ſenſation; they are objects that always claim protection, but not often reverence. We tremble before

a woman, and are in deſpair at her cenſure. What reaſon can be alledged why the feeble are to bring down, even beneath their level, the ſtrong and nobler genius of man? We muſt conclude, that when the female character has ſo powerful an influence in human affairs, man muſt be greatly perverted. It was in corrupted France that ſhe became the arbitreſs of fortune.

Woman, from the place ſhe occupies in ſociety, derives her artifice, and from her defective education, her frivolity. By the one ſhe deceives, but by the other ſhe is eaſily deceived. In the opinion of reflecting men, ſhe is more injured by her frivolity, than by her art. The female character is a cruel ſovereign who admits of no toleration in her empire. He who has diſcovered the art of giving importance to trifles, and rendering important things trifling, is certain of her admiration; but he may employ the groſſeſt artifices to obtain her favours; becauſe ſhe is taken by the ſemblances of things. Why has the female character, in all ages, and through all the diverſities of human manners, been moſt ſeverely treated, by men of the fineſt diſcernment? Becauſe it is a kind of revenge; men of great talents muſt never expect to receive their celebrity from women; for they muſt firſt become frivolous; that is, great men muſt ſubmit to become women. But when we look over the catalogue of illuſtrious men, ſcarce a ſolitary inſtance exiſts of this ſoleciſm in nature.

I conclude by repeating that the female character derives all her importance from the depravity of man; but if, by a very different ſyſtem of education, ſhe could employ this influence, to raiſe, rather than to depreſs, the character of man, would it not be a happy reformation?—Yes, for the *ſtate*, but not for the *ſex*.

The nation would acquire great men, but the women would loſe their idolaters.

Theſe reflections are to be confined to the females of the higher and corrupt orders of ſociety; and to thoſe, particularly, of a voluptuous nation. In our country the female character has rarely exhibited that depravity

depravity of heart, that duplicity of manners, and that laxity of moral ſentiment, which have diſgraced the women of France. Becauſe the character of Engliſhmen has been ever more auſtere than that of Frenchmen; and it is in proportion to the degeneracy of men, that women degenerate. It is remarkable that the eminent examples of female talents and female virtues, always exiſt when the ſame virtues and the ſame talents are exerted by men. The moſt amiable beings are, therefore, the moſt flexible, and for their dereliction, man muſt reproach himſelf, but never the female character. Have not Juvenal and Boileau, Pope and Young, Cheſterfield and Bruyere, and others, conſidered themſelves rather as ſatiriſts than philoſophers?

On the Alliance between Love and Religion.

It has been remarked that there is a frame of mind, ſo conſtituted, that it becomes naturally religious; as it is certain that there are ſome temperaments which are naturally amorous. Religion has kindled it's brighteſt fervours in thoſe perſons who unite theſe ſenſations, and the purity of devotion has been deplorably corrupted, by the admixture of a violent paſſion for the ſex. He who loves religion, as religion ſhould be loved, deprived of the adventitious politics of men, and unſoiled by thoſe voluptuous imaginations which degrade the divinity, will not cenſure this attempt to expoſe the danger which a feeling and feminine heart too frequently incurs, and which, while

while it appears to aſpire to celeſtial perfection, is only the more firmly intangled in terreſtrial licentiouſneſs.

Has religion been attacked in her ſanctuary? Have the virtuous united with the criminal? Has the voice of nations ſanctioned the declamations of the impious? It is becauſe prieſts and religioniſts have deſtroyed the edifice they were to guard and to inhabit. Among the terrible diſorders with which theſe have polluted "the holy of holies," one of the moſt ſtriking is this mixture of love with religion. This monſtrous union, even in the preſent day, perverts pſalms into philtres, and conventicles into brothels; yet, as the ſame cauſe produces different effects on various minds, what inflames the pious with a burning devotion, only warms the wit into grave raillery, while it animates the inſtructive execration of the philoſopher.

Poets

Poets are amorous, lovers are poetical, but ſaints are both. Religion, love, and poetry, are ſtreams from the ſame fountain; they are alike characteriſed by a certain tender melancholy, which ever accompanies the quiet intervals of an enthuſiaſtic fancy; while often there is a ſtage in theſe paſſions, at which reaſon diſappears, and a continued or a temporary inſanity is prevalent; and among lunatics the greater part will frequently be diſcovered to be religious, poetical, or amorous. The incurables unite the three paſſions. But, without further diſcuſſion, I ſhall arrange thoſe facts, relative to the preſent ſubject, which I have collected with ſome care and ſome curioſity.

The paſſion the deity inſpires, is according to the conceptions we form of the deity. The chriſtian religion in the perſons of Jeſus and the Virgin, ſet afloat a new train of ideas; and the amatory paſſions have been kindled,

dled, and the amatory language has been adopted.

In the preceding eſſay on the influence of the female character in religion and in politics, ſome obſervations, and ſome hiſtorical evidence, are introduced on the amatorial intimacy of the early propagators of religion with the ladies. The genius of thoſe pious men, ſurvived in their modern deſcendants, and women, it is ſcarce neceſſary to add, are always women. Thoſe handſome ſeraphs in France, who were called directors, and who had nothing ghoſtly about them but their functions, retained the ſame extraordinary influence, and have performed miracles in the cauſe of religion and gallantry. The young devotees of our numerous ſects are not leſs ſenſitive; and while they blend with an exceſs of devotion, all the intemperance of love, ſoften the groans of religious affliction,

affliction, with the ſighs of amorous pleaſure.

The Catholic religion is an academy of love. The effuſions of a Spaniard to the Virgin, and a repentant frail one, addreſſing her prototype Mary Magdalen, with an "*ora pro nobis*," employ language which comports as little with piety as modeſty. I have even heard a pretty Arian ſpeak, with ſome conviction, of the divinity of Jeſus, after having read the beautiful deſcription of his perſon in Joſephus; and which was interpolated by ſome monk, who well knew that even the ſon of God would come recommended to the ladies, by the charms of his perſon. The illuſtrious pious are always repreſented as beautiful; from the oriental obſcenities of Solomon, the Jewiſh Ovid, to the groſſneſs of Zinzendorff, and the indecencies of Whitfield.

The

The union exiſting between love and religion no where appears clearer, than by the confeſſion ſaid to be made by Mahomet; that the pleaſures of the ſex rendered him more fervent in prayer. In love, as well as religion, he muſt have been an adequate judge; for he was a Turk, and a prophet; the firſt ſuppoſing a great experience in ſenſual pleaſures, and the other in ſpiritual delights. He promiſed for the reward of piety, a bevy of immortal beauties; every prophet, like every phyſician, has recommended that ſyſtem to their patients which they found moſt agreeable to their own feelings. But I cannot perceive that the opinion of Mahomet at all differed from that of a Chriſtian Saint, Catharine, who obſerved, "how unhappy muſt be the ſtate of the damned, ſince they are no longer capable of *loving*."

To purſue our ſpeculation with ſomething like hiſtorical regularity, we may

may obſerve, that David and his ſon are not leſs celebrated for the number of their Pſalms and Proverbs, than for their Concubines. It is fortunate for them, that we have no ſecret memoirs of thoſe days; we know, however, ſufficient; and indeed we could not expect great regularity of manners in men, who were at once poets, lovers, and ſaints. Glancing into the early ages of chriſtianity, I paſs over an anecdote of no leſs a perſon than the author of the Chriſtian Creed, who is ſaid to have concealed himſelf, for a conſiderable time, in the embraces of a favourite devotee; but Saint Athanaſius aſſures us, that during the whole time, he lay hid in an empty jar. Proceeding to a later period we diſcover the amatorial ſpirit to be ſo congenial to religion, that public marriages were ſolemniſed between ſome eminent characters, and a favourite ſaint. Pope Pius V. was publicly united in matri-

mony to Saint Catharine; and the author of his life aſſures us, that this ancient lady kiſſed him, and preſented him with a ring of her own hair. Tanchelm of Antwerp publicly eſpouſed an image of the Virgin Mary, and with no inconſiderable portion; for having placed two boxes near her, to receive the voluntary contributions of the numerous ſpectators, the women were ſo faſcinated with the idea of a nuptial ceremony, that, alike animated by love and religion, they tore their necklaces and ear-rings, to preſent them to the Virgin and her Tanchelm.

Deſcending to a later period we obſerve the ſame cauſe operating the ſame effects. The ſingular inſtitutions of chivalry, illuſtrate the alliance between the two paſſions. The learned Saint Palaye has obſerved, that the firſt leſſons of chivalry related to the love of God and the ladies; that is, religion and gallantry. "The ladies," he ſays,

ſays, " taught them, at the ſame time, their catechiſm and the art of love." It was in the genuine ſpirit of chivalry, that Boccaccio returned thanks to God and the ladies, for the ſucceſs of his agreeable and licentious tales. Boccaccio at length became ſo voluptuous in his indulgence for love, poetry, and religion, that this unfortunate man of genius was ſeiſed by the terrors of the prieſts, and appears to have cloſed his days in the lunacy of catholiciſm.

From the twelfth century to no remote period, nothing pleaſed in devotion, but what was combined with love. Romances were filled with religion, as well as religion with romances. They haſtened to confeſſion to find lovers, and having found lovers, probably perceived it neceſſary to return to confeſſion. The learned Lenglet du Freſnoy comes here to my aſſiſtance. Writing on the romances of this period, he obſerves, that " Jeſus

Chriſt and Apollo, Cupid and the Holy Ghoſt, Venus and the Virgin, went hand in hand in the early productions of this kind." Of theſe works one only is printed, which is the celebrated Roman de la Roſe.

The primers of the pious were at one period ſo many votive offerings to love. In the reign of Henry III. of France, moſt great men had theſe religious manuals illuminated with ſubjects, from the ſacred writings, in which were introduced the portraits of their favourite minions and miſtreſſes. Charles V. had a miſſal painted for his miſtreſs, of a ſimilar deſcription; it was ornamented by figures depicted by Albert Durer, and the ſubjects were not leſs extravagant than licentious. So poſſible is it to be fervent at once in love and religion, that the Queen of Navarre, in one of her novels, notices a Prince, who, going to his uſual aſſignation with the lady of a counſel-

lor,

lor, always ſtopped to pray in a Church which he paſſed; her Majeſty highly applauds his devotion, as well as his paſſion; and adviſes all true lovers not to neglect the duties of religion.

Several curious publications might be mentioned, compoſed by pious perſons. Of theſe modern works, none is more ſingular than the life of Marie à la Coque, not inelegantly written by an Archbiſhop of Sens. This woman was a viſionary, who, having overheated her brain, by the peruſal of religious works, and the rigours of penitential faſts, betrothed herſelf to Jeſus. From her own narrative the Archbiſhop compoſed this pious romance, in which the whole progreſs of her celeſtial amour is traced in the ſtyle of a circulating-library novel. We have a copy of amatory verſes, which Jeſus wrote to his new ſpouſe, and ſcenes are deſcribed with great lubricity of imagination. It is certain this inge-

nious Archbiſhop could not have believed the reveries he wrote; but he well knew that ſuch fictions, delivered as truths, would have a great effect with the devotees, and it muſt be confeſſed, that the Pariſian Belle was charmed to worſhip a deity, ſo much reſembling *un homme du grand monde.* Similar publications abound in French and Spaniſh literature, and it has been obſerved, by ſome of their caſuiſts, that they always found the greateſt ſinners made the greateſt ſaints; the reaſon is not difficult to diſcern, ſince ſuch ſanctity is in proportion to the criminal imaginations of the religioniſt.

Even the ceremonies of religion, both in ancient and in modern times, have exhibited the groſſeſt indecencies. Prieſts, in all ages, have been the ſucceſsful panders of the human heart, and have introduced in the ſolemn worſhip of the divinity, incitements, gratifications, and repreſentations, which the

the pen of the hiſtorian muſt refuſe to deſcribe. Often has the ſenſible Catholic bluſhed amidſt his devotions; and I have ſeen Chapels ſurrounded by pictures of laſcivious attitudes, and the obſolete amours of ſaints revived by the pencil of ſome Aretine. At this moment there exiſts a conſiderable trafic of *certain* waxen figures, in ſome parts of Calabria, which a royal edict in vain attempted to aboliſh; and it is urged in it's favour, by the prieſts of the neighbourhood, that in no part of Italy are the young devotees ſo fervent in prayer, and ſo obſequious to the inſtructions of the prieſt.

In religious ſolitude, theſe confuſed notions of love and religion perplexed the wavering and debilitated heart of the pious Recluſe. On the burning pillow of the Monk hovered phantoms of melancholy luſt; his fancy was the ſcourge of the furies, and of the innumerable viſions with which theſe men

were diſturbed, they were ever accompanied by the ſeducing form of a beautiful female, and the day was paſſed in contrition for the temptations of the nightly demon. Their homilies were manuals of love, and the more religious they became, the more depraved were their imaginations. In the nunnery, the love of Jeſus was the moſt abandoned of paſſions, and the ideal eſpouſal was indulged at the coſt of the feeble heart of many a ſolitary beauty. Several manuſcript diaries have been preſerved of theſe amiable fanatics, in which the embraces and ſenſations of ſpiritual love are not diſtinguiſhable from thoſe of a material nature. An eternal meditation on the ſame object, terminated frequently in the horrors of delirium; and when the ſoul, by a ceaſeleſs inquietude, had accuſtomed itſelf to be penetrated with the love of Jeſus, while all other ideas faded and vaniſhed from the mind, it

ſunk

ſunk in the ſtupor of imbecillity, and could alone occupy itſelf by this ſolitary idea. Tiſſot has given a caſe of this nature; a young woman having yielded herſelf up to all the extravagance of love and religion, during ſix months that he attended her, ſhe could only articulate at intervals, "my beloved lamb, come to my arms."

We muſt now turn our obſervations to a conſiderable portion of the religious world, who, known under various denominations, may be claſſed under the generic title of Myſtics. The ancient Platoniſts appear to have reſembled the modern Myſtics; they carried theſe united paſſions to a great perfection; yet, it is clear, that the Platoniſts trembled to gather the celeſtial palms of religion, on the precipices of love. John Norris, a celebrated Engliſh Platoniſt, in his "Theory and Regulation of Love," conſidering all vices and virtues, as the various

various modifications and irregularities of love, maintains this principle, that the love of God ought to be entire, and excluſive of all other loves. This ſingular diſtinction could never have entered into the imagination of any perſon, excepting that of a lover and religioniſt; but, without doubt, the author had found it, among his female Platoniſts, as a principle very neceſſary to inculcate.

The Myſtics were enamoured of the ſweet union. Of theſe, Antoinette Bourignon is among the moſt celebrated. She perſuaded ſome, and what is more ſtrange, is ſuppoſed to have perſuaded herſelf, that ſhe received the viſitations of the divine ſpirit. Her opinions became ſo faſhionable, that they were propagated in this country, and Leſley thought proper to publiſh an elaborate refutation of her errors. We are told ſhe was endowed with an extraordinary gift of chaſtity, and which,

which, ſhe informs us, had been frequently attempted; ſcandalous reports were on the wing, and ſhe anticipated them. She, like other female ſaints aſpiring to be eſpouſed to the Son of God, was deſirous the public ſhould know, that ſhe was not incapable of attracting ſeveral young men. The faſcinating ardours of theſe Myſtics prevailed over the gentle mind of the virtuous Fenelon, who once rendered a man of fine genius ridiculous to all Europe by his patronage of Madame Guyon. The ſage author of Telemachus wandered in his retirement, ſtudious of her "ſpiritual guide," her "ſhort way," and her "torrents." The imagination of this lady was not of the moſt chaſte, nor of the moſt beautiful kind, yet it was certainly imagination, and it's wild fervours overpowered the ſuſceptible ſoul of Fenelon. By the alchemy of his own fine genius, he turned obſcenity into purity,

purity, and incoherence into regularity. How are we otherwiſe to account for this ſingular faſcination?

The ſame genius characteriſes our female Methodiſts, who haſten to their Chapel, as the faſhionable to the front boxes of the Theatre. An extraordinary neatneſs of dreſs diſtinguiſhes a devotee, and while ſhe ſings a tender pſalm, the warmeſt tears, and the moſt voluptuous ſighs, atteſt her ſenſibility. An intrigue too often commences in a pew; and I do not know why the magiſtrates, who are empowered to proſecute the venders of obſcene publications, permit the hymns, the diaries, and other rapturous effuſions of our fanatics. Theſe are the Ovidian touches of the kitchen. Where are to be found, as among ſimilar ſects, an equal number of lovers? If one part of aſcetic chriſtianity threatened, if univerſally adopted, to depopulate the world, the other, of myſtic chriſtianity,

tianity, appears reſolute in rectifying that political error; and perhaps no ſociety ſo ſmall as that of methodiſm, has produced to the State, ſo many additional members.

This cloſe alliance between love and religion, many writers have noticed, without accounting for it; and the greater part have only ventured to expreſs their aſtoniſhment, and to doubt the fact. A great obſerver of the human character, enquires if the heart can conciliate ſuch oppoſite paſſions, and admit ſuch incompatibilities? But we ſee that the paſſions are not oppoſite or incompatible; ſince libertiniſm has been one inſtrument which the hand of prieſts has employed for the purpoſes of religion. It is acutely obſerved by Monteſquieu, that a Myſtic is only mad, devout, and licentious. But we may alſo add, that the delirium has often only conſiſted in the expreſſions which theſe perſons adopt; and

and all the extatic viſions they notice, are ſometimes only ſo many metaphors, by which they conceal their libertiniſm of mind. The Methodiſts of the laſt century (for methodiſm is an old folly with a new name) employed all this devotional cant. The father of our immortal dramatiſt, probably far gone in love and religion, thus expreſſes himſelf in his will, "I bequeath my ſoul to be entombed in the ſweet and *amorous* coffin of the *ſide* of Jeſus Chriſt!" Even elegant minds, adding to the orgaſm of poetry, that of religious extacy, employ the ſtyle of the moſt plaintive and tender lovers. Racine the ſon, in his Poem on Religion, has many ſuch touches. He engraved under his crucifix, the very expreſſions Tibullus has addreſſed to his miſtreſs. The Latin poet ſays,

Te ſpectem, ſuprema mihi cum venerit hora,
Te teneam moriens, deficiente manu.

Which

Which Racine thus adopts, in addreſſing Jeſus,

Que ta Croix dans mes mains ſoit à ma derniere heure,
Et que, les yeux ſur toi, je t'embraſſe et je meure.

In an epiſtle, ſuppoſed to be written by the famous Abbé Rancé, of La Trappe, the alliance between love and religion is well marked in the following verſe,

Je n'avois plus d'Amante, il me fallut un Dieu.

Our ſublime Milton, who, as he was a great poet, and no inconſiderable fanatic, muſt have been, no doubt, a warm lover, appears alſo to have conceived that the rewards of a future ſtate, can only conſiſt of amatorial pleaſures. This curious paſſage is in the Paradiſe Loſt, book v. verſe 612. Adam is thus converſing with the angel,

" To love thou blameſt me not, for *love*, thou ſayſt,
Leads up to heaven, is both the *way and guide*;
Bear with me then, if lawful what I aſk;
Love not the heavenly ſpirits; and how their love
Expreſs they, by looks only", or do they *mix*
Irradiance, virtual or immediate *touch*?

I will not fatigue the reader with additional confirmations of what I have advanced. I ſhall only obſerve, that the enthuſiaſt Rouſſeau, who certainly was a poet, though he wrote in proſe; a lover of exquiſite ſenſibility, though he married his laundreſs; and pious, though he wrote againſt the clergy, perceived the union which has paſſed under our examination. In one of his notes to his delicious romance, he obſerves, "That the enthuſiaſm of devotion borrows the language of love; the enthuſiaſm of love borrows the language of devotion."

I conclude by obſerving, that one of the moſt dangerous corruptions, introduced into religion, by artful and atheiſtical prieſts, has been that of the moſt libidinous paſſions. How much, therefore, is it to the honour of our eſtabliſhed Church, that it alone, of every branch of chriſtianity, does not annihilate

annihilate that chaſtity of mind, which is the female's peculiar and precious ornament.

On French and English Poetry, and on some French Words.

AMONG the peculiar felicities of an Engliſhman, are to be accounted ſome of his literary enjoyments. He peruſes with continued rapture, the works of Shakeſpeare and Milton. One muſt be accuſtomed from the moſt ſuſceptible age, to accommodate oneſelf to their ſtrong and verſatile genius; as the Turks, habituated to their favourite opium, feaſt deliciouſly on copious quantities, which would inebriate and diſguſt a foreigner.

An Engliſh critic deteſts French poetry, as loyally, as he does French politics. The plenteous roſes that grow on the borders of the Seine, paſſed through his alembic, yield but a few drops of odour; but I conceive this to be

be no defect of the roſes, but of the alembic.

On the other ſide, a French critic cannot patiently endure ten pages of Shakeſpeare and Milton. The pleaſure is uncertain and fugitive, while the diſguſt is frequent and repulſive. He views a chaos of genius, where light and darkneſs are in continual oppoſition; elaborate deformities and miſplaced beauties; grandeur neighbouring to meanneſs.

Such are the deciſions of national critics; but it is poſſible to cenſure both parties, by applauding the compoſitions of both.

It is evident that the genius of Engliſh and French poetry is widely different. Our theatre and our poems afford the proofs. The Cato of Addiſon, which by it's regularity of plot, and correctneſs of compoſition, has ever been a great favourite in France, is at home rarely acted, and is much

more approved than applauded. The French ſay that we had no perfect tragedy till Cato appeared. Among a few kindred compoſitions, the Phædra of Smith, one of the moſt elegant and claſſical of our dramatic pieces, was very ill received on the ſtage. The Temple of Fame, of Pope, one of his moſt elaborate, was his leaſt popular poem; it never attracted notice, is rarely quoted, and the opinion of Steele at firſt augured it's ill ſucceſs. Yet it is this poem which M. Yart in his ſelections of Engliſh poetry, gave as one of it's moſt precious compoſitions, and this opinion has been confirmed by the French critics. Of the French poets, Corneille is the moſt attacked in his country, and the moſt admired in our own. He bears ſome affinity to the irregular force of Shakeſpeare; he has many of his defects, and ſometimes his beauties. His characters are heroic; and he ſacri-

fices

ſices little to the ſighing and amorous theatre of the French. The real emotions of love, Corneille appears never to have felt in poetry; all his females are heroines and politicians. What muſt we think of Emilia, in Cinna, who will not beſtow her hand, unleſs ſhe receives for the nuptial gift, the head of Auguſtus? Another heroine only unites herſelf to Sertorius, for the pleaſure of puniſhing Pompey. The celebrated ſcenes between Chimene and Rodrigue diſcover little of the delicacy of the amatorial paſſion. But he is a hero, and Engliſhmen feel a congeniality of diſpoſition. The love ſcenes in which Corneille has failed, would not have equally gratified us, had they poſſeſſed the continued elegance, the ſweet volubility, and pervading ſoftneſs of Racine. His defects, therefore, are not ſo ſenſibly felt in this country as in his own, and his beauties are much more. I found this criticiſm upon

facts, and I think that Pope, in one line, has conveyed our national ſentiment reſpecting theſe two great rivals, and maſters of the French drama;

"*Exact* Racine, and Corneille's *noble fire*."

Our national genius has ever been more vigorous than graceful, and more ſolid than refined. We are not leſs partial to the bizarre than the beautiful, and we are pleaſed with a Hogarth, at leaſt as often, as with a Raphael. The French preceded us in polite literature and polite criticiſm, and I much fear that we have not yet approached the eloquence of their fineſt compoſitions. We exult in the ſtrength of our oaks, and contemptuouſly regard the delicacy of their vines; but, perhaps, we may yet be pleaſed to unite them on the ſame ſoil.

One circumſtance in this variance of taſte, long appeared to me myſterious. Claſſical literature is ſtudiouſly cultivated in England; no nation is ſo much

much attached to the Grecians and the Latins, as Engliſhmen; and it would therefore ſeem, that that which moſt approaches their manner, would be moſt adapted to gratify the national taſte. But how is it that the reverſe is the fact? We have few poets, excepting Pope, who are profeſſed imitators of the ancients, while in France, their eminent poets have enriched themſelves with their ſpoils.

This national ſingularity, of ſtudents devoting themſelves to the claſſical Muſes, while the public at large are not delighted by a poet, who forms himſelf on the models of antiquity, may, perhaps, be accounted for in the following manner. The character of our earlieſt poetry is Gothic; our poetical infancy was nouriſhed with Italian milk, and the venerable Chaucer educated his Muſe in the ſchools of Italian fancy. Spencer, Shakeſpeare, and Milton, completed the na-

tion's poetical taſte. In the reign of Charles II. a new ſchool was commenced by Dryden, and ſince perfected by Pope, with which we are now familiariſed; but I conceive that there remains a certain licentiouſneſs and boldneſs in the national poetical taſte, which is inimical to regularity and correctneſs.

An independent ſpirit characteriſed the poets of the Gothic ſchool; but like all independence, their manners have a mixture of the grand and the mean, the heroic and the puerile. Their daring and uncontrouled ſpirit often attained to a loftineſs unknown to their claſſical rivals, but their opulence is

"Barbaric pearl and gold."

Pope.

Their imagination wandered in a new creation; it was more abſtracted, more wild, more luſtrous. But it was frequently,

quently, as one of themſelves expreſſes it,

"Dark with exceſſive light."

Milton.

It cannot be ſaid that theſe votariſts of the imagination had the modeſt dignity, the clear conduct, and the ſubdued imagination of Virgil; but rather the originality, the ſpirit, and the vehemence of Homer. One need only have taſte to receive the tranquil pleaſures of a claſſical poet, but the Gothic writers are unintelligible, if we cannot aſſimilate our minds with their peculiar diſpoſitions.

It is not, therefore, ſurpriſing, that Arioſto and Taſſo, Spenſer and Milton, and Shakeſpeare, who felicitouſly united their varied characters, to his own powerful conceptions of the human character, ſhould have excited the wit, the reaſoning, and the ridicule, of the critics of the oppoſite ſchool. It is like cenſuring the manners of a diſtant

diſtant nation, becauſe they differ from our own. Yet it muſt not be denied, that in criticiſm, as in human nature, there are certain univerſal axioms, which are independent of every local cuſtom. Order muſt ever be acknowledged ſuperior to confuſion, decency to licentiouſneſs, and ſimplicity to affectation; the claſſical ſchool has, therefore, ſucceſsfully attacked many a vulnerable ſide of the Gothic poets. To theſe children of fancy, Fairy Land opened all it's gorgeous miracles, and as the dragon of criticiſm was not placed at the entrance of the poetical Heſperides, they plucked, at pleaſure, the golden fruitage, and ſported with the freedom, and ſometimes with the licentiouſneſs of revellers, who diſdained the arm of the legiſlator. But it was not thus in France; criticiſm had flouriſhed there at an early period, and the art of poetry had long exerciſed the colder and diſquiſitive genius

of

of their wits; Ariſtotle became as great a favourite as Homer. And it is an acknowledged fact in literary inveſtigation, that whenever criticiſm flouriſhes, a ſevere and minute taſte will be formed, and the luxuriancies of imagination muſt be trimmed and lopped by the poliſhing ſteel of art.

Hence is it, that ſo many extraordinary criticiſms have appeared by ſome eminent writers of both nations. Boileau and Racine, two moſt finiſhed poets, have been often ſlightly appreciated in our country; the claſſical purity, and the bitter cauſticity of Boileau, have ſometimes been conſidered as only frigid imitation; and the equable flow, and concealed delicacy of Racine, have not been generally taſted in a country, where energy, rather than delicacy, is found moſt to pleaſe. Voltaire's Henriade has been little eſteemed, and denied to be an epic, but I cannot approve it the leſs, if it were merely to deſerve

deſerve the degrading diſtinction, of being only a very fine poem.

But the Engliſh Muſes have fared much worſe at Paris, than their French Siſters at London. Our brilliant monſters, as the works of Milton and Shakeſpeare have been called by Voltaire, is a favourable diſtinction. The French have tranſlated our beſt poets in proſe and verſe; and when we compare theſe verſions with the originals, we ſhall be little ſurpriſed at the ſeverity of criticiſm. The brighteſt paſſages in Shakeſpeare and Milton, are ſo cloſely attached to the force and genius of our language; ſo many ſecret charms are concealed in their numbers; ſo many marvellous words that are embrowned by the touch of antiquity; ſo many happy boldneſſes of expreſſion; and ſuch a continuance of metaphorical diction; that I am perſuaded no foreign ſtudent can ever taſte them, like a native, in their original.

ginal. There are certain poets, who reſiſt the niceſt ſkill of tranſlation; who refuſe to ſpeak in any other language than their own, and who have ſo conſtructed their diction, by the idiom and manners of their own country, that not a ſufficient number of equivalent phraſes, or colours of diction, can be found by a foreigner in his own language. When by violence we tear away the ſentiment or image, to place it in another language, it is like rending the embroidered flower from a veil of gauze; the flower may be ſeiſed on, but the gauze which gave it it's peculiar beauty will be wanting.

What we have obſerved of this kind of imagination, extends alſo to works of humour. There is an idiom in the manners of men, as well as in their language. We are not leſs diſtinguiſhed by our national humour, than by our national imagination; and the fineſt ſtrokes in the characters of Sir John

John Falſtaff and Sir Roger de Coverley, I can ſpeak from my own obſervation, can never be reliſhed by a man of letters in France; and I may add, that the wit of Moliere will not be certain of ſecuring every Engliſhman as his admirer. It is not, therefore, ſurpriſing, that moſt of the French tranſlators, have reſcinded from many of our authors, thoſe portions of their compoſitions, which are moſt valued by a native.

But to return to our preſent inveſtigation. Writers of the Gothic character we have mentioned, add to theſe difficulties, that of opening a vein of purer poetry, which is unknown in the ſchool of wit and correctneſs. The moſt enlightened critic of the ſeverer, wants many ſenſations for the romantic poetry.

It has therefore happened, that ſome of our own eminent writers, in the character of critics, have delivered

deciſions

deciſions on our own poetry, which to many have appeared extraordinary and unjuſt. Shafteſbury, whoſe taſte was formed on the beſt models, and who reſpected the modern French writers, as well as the ancients, has ſarcaſtically obſerved, that "An Engliſh author would be all genius. The *limæ labor* is the great grievance with our countrymen." He ſays, "Our Muſes have ſcarce arrived to any thing of ſhapelineſs or perſon. They liſp as in their cradle; and their ſtammering tongues, their youth and rawneſs muſt excuſe. Our dramatic Shakeſpeare, Fletcher, Jonſon, and our epic Milton, preſerve this ſtile." The critical ſtrictures of Hume, on our poets, which I would not heſitate to adopt, have been frequently cenſured, and it has been ſuppoſed, that becauſe his refined taſte, quickly felt, and accurately traced, the groſſer blemiſhes of Shakeſpeare and Milton, he was therefore deficient in

in poetical ſenſations. But does not the admirable writer of "The Epicurean," diſplay a fine and chaſtiſed imagination, a delicacy of ſentiment, and a livelineſs of imagery, which will not eaſily be paralleled? Cheſterfield who had read and admired the French criticks, and the French writers, has alſo freely condemned ſome of the ebullitions of our firſt poets; and the taſte of Addiſon and Pope was deeply imbued with the ſtudies of French critics, and richly nouriſhed on French authors. Such reſpectable critics as Warburton, Hurd, and Warton,* are not penurious of their contempt of French critics; but it is certain that they have conſiderably profited by their uſe. They have acted the ungenerous

* The earlier volumes of the Critical Review are remarkable for their continued abuſe of French writers; one ſtyle, and one mode of thinking, characteriſe the larger articles; but who this Engliſh patriot was, I am not yet certain. It might be Smollet, or Franklin; the critiques have perhaps too much ſpirit and acrimony, to be attributed to the latter.

generous part of that ruffian traveller, who always pillaged or maſſacred under the hoſpitable roof that afforded him ſhelter and repoſe. Young, in his taſteleſs verſification, whoſe fondneſs for conceit and floridneſs of wit, unite the defects of the inferior Italian poets, has been pleaſed to warn us, not to borrow any thing from the French, becauſe, obſerves the profound wit,

" Britons are grave and ſolid; and a *dance*
Far better may import, than *thoughts* from France."
Young's Second Epiſtle to Pope.

If we are really ſo grave and ſolid, why did our poet compoſe his ſatires in a chain of twiſted epigrams? And why did he ſtudy, admire, and feebly imitate, the ſolid and judicious Boileau? But Young is a writer, whoſe errors we muſt reprimand, but whoſe genius we revere.

Johnſon was a lover of French literature, and it's charms had for him the power of calming his national ha-

tred, and extorting his warm applauſe. He admired their gay and airy manner; their decorated and ſparkling periods, their verſatile talents, and their copiouſneſs of ſubjects. He who has formed a taſte, and he who has matured his taſte into a paſſion for literary hiſtory, and the wide circle of literary information, can no where gratify it, but in French literature; no European nation has yet equalled the varieties of their reſearches; the diverſifications of their criticiſm; and the multitude of their anecdotes; for no one has yet felt an equal paſſion for the Belles Lettres. They have, indeed, the honour of giving their title to polite literature. We have but juſt eſcaped from the trammels of claſſical pedantry, and we have yet only eſſayed to wear the flowery chains of the Graces of literature.

The introduction of French words has been cenſured with due indigna-

tion;

tion; but it will be ſometimes diſcovered, that however copious our vocabulary, our *critical language* is eminently defective, if compared with that of the French. Nor is the reaſon difficult to aſſign. In an age of literary refinement, criticiſm conſtructs a language which often happily deſcribes the feelings of taſte. I muſt yield up my convictions, if I were to deny that the French language abounds with lively expreſſions, with acute diſtinctions, and with peculiar terms, which paint our literary ſenſations; becauſe I repeat, that nation long preceded us in critical learning, and has been more attached to the cultivation of the Belles Lettres. It would be difficult, and if I may judge by my own attempts, I ſhould ſay it is impoſſible, to tranſlate ſome of their critiques; ſo peculiarly brilliant, ſo ſubtilly delicate, ſo appropriately juſt, are ſome

of their expreſſions.* The beautiful and light ideas of taſte are ever dimly ſeen through the twilight of language; and even this ingenious and literary people have complained of the deficiencies of their ſtyle. If we acknowledge that the Engliſh language boaſts a rich abundance, is it requiſite for the critic of taſte to be informed, that the language of genius is yet barren in every nation?

But

* I point out for one inſtance among many ſimilar ones, the *Reflexions critiques ſur le genie d'Horace, de Deſpreaux, et de Rouſſeau*, by the Duke de Nivernois. It is a precious, and in our language, an incomparable model of criticiſm. I am convinced that Johnſon derives a conſiderable portion of his beſt manner in his biographical criticiſms from the French; and we may obſerve by his own confeſſion, that at firſt, he propoſed drawing up his articles in the manner of a French publication. See his advertiſement. Dr. Warton, in his advertiſement to his Eſſay on Pope, apparently moſt involuntarily, confeſſes the force of the French language on literary topics. He ſays he does not conſider the French quotations as any decoration to his ſtyle, and "he only uſes French words when the force and meaning of the paſſages ſo quoted, depend on the peculiar turn and idiom of the original."—He therefore confeſſes that we have not parallel expreſſions for the many beautiful ones in the French language; and his quotations are copious and numerous.

But as general obſervation is of little value, unleſs elucidated by example, I ſhall notice a few French words, which, at preſent, offer themſelves to my recollection, and of which I confeſs myſelf incapable of diſcovering adequate and exact parallels in our language. The words *naiveté*, a *critique*, *ennui*, *bizarre*, and ſome others, have at length been made denizens; but certain critics put me often in deſpair, when I would introduce to their notice, ſome other foreigners, who I well know have conſiderable merit, and are by no means ſo inſignificant as they imagine.—An *Erudit* is very different from a *pedant*; becauſe a pedant is univerſally underſtood to be a learned fool, converſant only with the ancient claſſicks; but an *erudit* is a learned fool, who has crouded his intellect with the minutiæ of learning, and is familiar with the hiſtorical, and not with the philoſophical part of a ſub-

ject.—A *litterateur* is a man of letters, and a *profateur* a writer of profe; and I would prefer them, becaufe they give a neceffary and diftinctive title, and have greater force than our feebler paraphrafe.*—To expreſs the warineſs or circumſpection of an author, who ſuppreſſes what he thinks advantageous for his cauſe to ſuppreſs, the French employ the word *reteniie*. The Biſhop of Worceſter ſays ironically, " It is plain that virtue hath not been very common amongſt us, from our having no

* That theſe niceties are not over refinements, I am pleaſed to confirm by an obſervation I have juſt diſcovered in Dr. Parr's " Tracts by Warburton, and a Warburtonian." Of Dr. Parr's ſplendour and energy of diction, we cannot think too highly; his compoſitions give a new idea of the force and beauty of the Engliſh language.

At p. 162 he employs this expreſſion, " To the Remarker," and accompanies it with the following note. " I am not quite ſatisfied with this word, though Johnſon, in his Dictionary, affixes to it the authority of Watts. I uſe it from neceffity, or at leaſt, for the ſake of avoiding the tireſome periphraſis of ſaying " the writer of the Remarks."

The attic ear of Parr was pained by the languor of a tedious paraphraſe; and I preſume, that every man of taſte muſt deſire ſimilar words to *profateur* and *litterateur*, on the ſame principle as the word *remarker*.

no name to call it by."* *Un ſtyle enjoüé*, literally is *a chearful ſtyle*, but that expreſſion would ſound oddly in Engliſh, and it is wanted.—The Duke of Burgundy characteriſed Corneille as *un homme de Genie*, and Racine as *un homme d'Eſprit*. This admirable diſtinction exiſts not in our language.—How often have I ſighed to eraſe from my manuſcripts, the words *les delices*; *artiſtement*, which I venture to call *artiſtly*; the *tact* of criticiſm; which word has been lately employed by Mrs. Barbauld, in her Eſſay on Akenſide.—The French language is the language of ſentiment and delicacy; and when our great lexicographer was deſirous of forcibly expreſſing himſelf, on a ſubject in which his ſenſations were fervidly alive, (the gift of his penſion) he ſaid that he was compelled to have recourſe to the

* In his Eſſay "on the Delicacy of Friendſhip," republiſhed by Dr. Parr, in his Tracts by Warburton, and a Warburtonian. I ſay nothing of the motive of that Eſſay.

French word *penetré*. I will not weary the reader with this arid verbality; but conclude with one inſtance of the extreme delicacy and refinement of the French critical language. Their critics employ nice diſcriminations of expreſſion, which it is hopeleſs for an Engliſhman to attempt; and I quote for an illuſtration, the DELICAT and the DELIE' in literature. Theſe form no frivolous diſtinctions, but are perceptible ſhades to the ſenſations of a cultivated taſte. The DELICAT conſiſts of ideas united by an affinity not common; not immediately apparent; yet on examination, not too remote; it occaſions an agreeable ſurpriſe, and ſkilfully awakens ſome ſecret and acceſſory ideas of virtue, pleaſure, love, &c. The DELIE' is a more refined delicacy, where the artifice, the ſubtilty, and the writer's aim, ſeem ſtudiouſly concealed. Writers of the DELICAT may be frequently DELIE' in their manner

ner of expreſſion; but writers of the DELIE' are rarely DELICATS. A ſentimental impreſſion is communicated by the DELICAT, but the DELIE' has what we term "more than meets the ear," a kind of enigmatic elegance. One of their critics, writes thus on this diſtinction. "Throw over a compoſition *delié* the ſhade of ſentiment, and you will render it *delicat*; imagine that he who writes with the *delicat* has ſome concealed and ambiguous deſign, and he will inſtantly become a writer *delié*."* And muſt we not be permitted

* I am ſenſible how difficult it is to explain ſuch metaphyſical differences; I do not even flatter myſelf to have explained them; but they will be perceived by a fine writer when he employs them. It is by a ſtudious attention to ſuch refinements, that ſenſibility of taſte is heightened. I quote an obſervation of Hume, on the ſubject of taſte, which will throw light on this ſubject. He ſays, that "the ſmaller the objects are, which become ſenſible to the eye, the finer is that organ, and the more elaborate it's make and compoſition. A good palate is not tried by ſtrong flavours, but by a mixture of ſmall ingredients, where we are ſtill ſenſible of each part, notwithſtanding it's minuteneſs, and it's confuſion with the reſt. In like manner a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity

mitted to introduce ſuch expreſſive diſtinctions? If we do not *borrow* them from the French, or *invent* parallel terms, a writer of exquiſite taſte will have to deplore, in his every compoſition, the loſs and injury of many beautiful ideas. Cicero, among the Latins, was applauded for domiciliating Grecian terms in his maternal language; and though I am ſenſible, very heavy reſtrictions ſhould be laid on ſuch innovations, yet, like the ſuſpenſion of the Habeas Corpus Act, there are times in which it may become neceſſary to tranſgreſs the genius of our language, as well as our conſtitution.*

deformity muſt be the perfection of our mental taſte." And Johnſon obſerves, "He that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning. He that thinks with more ſubtilty, will ſeek for terms of more nice diſcrimination." We abound with writers and critics, who conſider their taſte as excellent, becauſe it is ſenſible of the more obvious beauties of an author, though inſenſible to the more delicate touches. But the taſte of ſuch critics and writers is not better than that which exiſts among the multitude.

* Mr. Nares, in his "Elements of Orthoepy," (a book with which every writer, ambitious of unviolated analogy

analogy in the Engliſh language, ſhould become familiariſed) has obſerved in the preface, that "In an enlightened and improving age, much, perhaps, is not to be apprehended from the inroads of mere caprice; at ſuch a period it will generally be perceived, that *needleſs irregularity* is the worſt of all deformities"—But are *ſome innovations* always *needleſs irregularities?*—He continues, "Rules will therefore be obſerved, ſo far as they are known and acknowledged; but at the ſame time the deſire of improvement having once been excited, will not remain inactive; and it's efforts, unleſs aſſiſted by knowledge, as much as they are prompted by zeal, will not unfrequently be found pernicious; ſo that the very perſons, whoſe intention it is to perfect the inſtrument of reaſon, will deprave and diſorder it unknowingly."—All this muſt be weighed by the judicious reader; I only ſhew my impartiality in quoting the opinion of a critic, whoſe judgment will, no doubt, be conſidered as of greater authority than my own.

So irregular and uncertain is our ſpeech, and we may add our language, that it is not ſubjected only to the tranſient innovations of ignorance, caprice, and affectation, but is liable to have theſe recorded and ratified by the labours of the learned. In a work like "the Elements of Orthoepy" it might have been hoped, that the purity of the language would have been promoted by a notation and expoſition of it's oral corruptions; but alas! this learned critic only endeavours to perpetuate inelegance and error, by giving the ſanction of his approbation to what he ſhould have ſtamped with diſgrace.—I am indebted for this obſervation to a learned critic, who has made ſome very uſeful annotations in MS. in a copy of this book.—There are not wanting inſtances in this work, in which the author, a profeſſed and able advocate for grammatical purity, has violated the genius of the Engliſh language. What does this prove? That authors are not to be criminated without mercy. Mr. Nares has ſaid, "The whole book, if it *performs* what it's compiler intends"—it ſhould be "if it *perform*;" the conjunction *if*, obſerves Lowth, making the

the ſenſe hypothetical or conditional, always governs the verb in the ſubjunctive mood. Again our author writes "This letter has *one uniform* ſound." This barbarous tautology may be eaſily avoided, if we read "*an uniform* ſound."—But I ſtop my pen, aſhamed in a work of ſo ſtrong a texture, to pick out ſuch looſe threads. I mean, however, that this note ſhould be inſtructive; we ſee our beſt authors claim great indulgence. It is the artifice of ſome critics, of very mean talents, to direct their acumen to ſuch venial errors; incapable of valuing the powers of a man of genius, they exult in ſuch mechanical detections; they almoſt appear to conſider genius as conſiſting in grammar; as thoſe hypocrites vigilantly cenſure the virtues of an elevated ſoul, becauſe not as ſuperſtitiouſly punctilious as themſelves, in the minuter ceremonies of religion; all the grammar poſſible will not produce one valuable ſentiment, as all the ceremonies of religion will not give birth to one ſublime virtue.

ADDENDA.

ADDENDA.

PAGE 158.

I AM inclined to believe, that of thoſe minor poems which I have deſcribed, a diligent ſelection among our fugitive poetry, might gather no inconſiderable volume. I think, however, that ſhort compoſitions, relative to the domeſtic paſſions, are not frequent; and the *Vers de Societé* form a ſpecies of poetical compoſition, which might ſtill be employed with great ſucceſs.

PAGE 165.

I confeſs, however, that every philoſopher is not ſo indifferent a prophet as the good Abbé de Saint Pierre. We have had ſeveral extracts from their writings, which have clearly predicted

dicted the great revolution of France. To this number I could add many; I ſhall give a very ſingular prediction of Rouſſeau, who, whether the Church will allow it or not, is certainly a very great prophet.

In his Emilius, book iii. p. 88, he writes. "We approach a ſtate of criſis, and an age of revolutions. Who can anſwer what will then happen to you? What men have made, men can deſtroy; there are no other indelible characters than thoſe formed by nature, and nature makes no princes, no rich, no lords. What then will your debaſed ſatrap do, who has been only habituated to grandeur?"—He accompanies the obſervation by this note.—"I conſider it as impoſſible, that the great monarchies of Europe can laſt long; they have all ſhone, and every ſtate that ſhines, is on the decline. I could maintain my opinion by reaſons more particular than this maxim; but this

this is not the place to tell them." All this might appear very wonderful, if it were not certain that the revolution in France had taken place, in the eye of the philoſopher, thirty or forty years, ere it appeared in the ſtreets of Paris. A revolution in a great kingdom has been long formed when it firſt appears to the common people. It would not be difficult, at the preſent moment, to offer ſome *predictions* reſpecting ourſelves, which would not be of an agreeable nature. But I ſhall ſay with Rouſſeau, this is not their place; and men do not like to be informed even of inevitable diſaſters. It is with revolutions, as with thunder clouds; the danger has paſt when the noiſe is heard; while the people complain, there is ſome faint hope of quiet; when they are ſullen and ſilent, it is then the lightning of vengeance darts it's fatal ſtroke. But while Britons unite, they can have no reaſon to fear the lunacy of republicaniſm.

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IT will not be denied, that Eraſmus was a friend to the freedom of the preſs; who, indeed, had employed it more than himſelf? Yet he was ſo ſhocked at the licentiouſneſs of Luther's pen, that there was a time when he conſidered it as neceſſary to reſtrain the liberty of the preſs. He had indeed been miſerably calumniated, and expected future libels. I am glad, however, to obſerve, that he afterwards, on a more impartial inveſtigation, confeſſed that ſuch a remedy was much more dangerous than the diſeaſe. To reſtrain the liberty of the preſs, can only be the intereſt of the individual, never that of the public.

PAGE 221.

THIS obſervation of the effect of *ideas* not rendered offenſive, merely becauſe the *words* are not familiar, may be further illuſtrated, by a paſ-

ſage

ſage I have juſt diſcovered in the Notes on Pope's Odyſſey. Homer has been ridiculed by certain critics, for having ſo minutely deſcribed the dog Argus, lying on a dung hill, nearly devoured by vermin.—The annotator then obſerves, "It is certain that the *vermin* which Homer mentions, would debaſe our poetry; but in the Greek, that very *word* is *noble* and *ſonorous*, Κυνοραϊξέων."—Here then is a word which can give dignity to a circumſtance very offenſive in itſelf; but we cannot at preſent, I think, decide whether this word, which appears to us ſo noble and ſonorous, affected an ancient Greek in the ſame manner. All that appears certain, is, that the Κυνοραϊξέων of Homer, and the *excalcearetur* and *diſcingeretur* of Velleius Paterculus, are noble and ſonorous terms to our ear, and abate from the familiarity of expreſſion.

Lord Kaimes, in his "Sketches of the Hiſtory of Man," vol. iii. p. 242, has a curious obſervation, which ſeems to relate to this ſubject, though by him applied to a different purpoſe. He writes, "A ſea-proſpect is charming, but we ſoon tire of an unbounded proſpect. It would not give ſatisfaction to ſay, that it is too extenſive; for why ſhould not a proſpect be reliſhed, however extenſive?" But employ *a foreign term*, and ſay that it is *trop vaſte*, we enquire no further; *a term that is not familiar, makes an impreſſion, and captivates weak reaſon.* This obſervation accounts for a mode of writing formerly in common uſe, that of ſtuffing our language with Latin words and phraſes.

I only quote Lord Kaimes, for the purpoſe of ſhewing the effect of expreſſions that are not familiar. His inſtance of the ſea appears to me erroneous; for we do not tire of the proſpect

pect of interminable waters, for the *extenſiveneſs*, but the *uniformity*. The Alps, like the ocean, preſent *extenſive proſpects*, but delight, becauſe they have alſo innumerable *varieties*.

The reader will pleaſe to obſerve, that the affectation I cenſure in Velleius, is not the words *excalcearetur* and *diſcingeretur*, but the *pompous parentheſis*, in which he apologiſes for mentioning theſe circumſtances. I have miſunderſtood the deſign of Ceſar, and have erroneouſly called that "a petty precaution," which is really a very noble action. This miſtake has been corrected by a learned friend. It does not affect my criticiſm, reſpecting the two words. I ſhall, however, give the tranſlation of my friend, accompanied by ſome obſervations.

"Nor was he ever, either by night or day, (for why ſhould any thing of the *greateſt kind* be omitted, becauſe it

cannot be expreſſed in beautiful language?) *unſlippered* or *ungirdled*."

The hiſtorian has told us before, that when Ceſar was threatened with death by the ſervile inſtruments of Sylla, he put on a mean habit, and eſcaped by night. This was a neceſſary meaſure. But among the pirates who treated him with reſpect, and where (as the hiſtorian expreſſes it) he was only guarded by the eye, he would not occaſion them to ſuſpect that he would make uſe of any diſguiſe to eſcape. He therefore altered not the minuteſt article of his dreſs, but appeared before their eyes always the ſame. This circumſtance was, therefore, no "petty precaution," but an action which ſhewed Ceſar's dignity of mind, and ſenſibility of honour, and was, as the hiſtorian terms it, "quod vel *maximum* eſt."

The affectation and obſcurity of Velleius, may lead minds much more vigorous

vigorous than my own aſtray. But it is a juſtice we owe to Ceſar, to correct even a miſrepreſentation as inconſiderable as the preſent. The reader will obſerve, that I have only erred in the conception of the hiſtorical fact; the criticiſm relative to Velleius remains uninjured.

PAGE 264.

ROUSSEAU is the adverſary of this ſyſtem; he adopts the popular notion that the aptitude of men, for the underſtanding merely depends on their reſpective organiſation, and their virtues, on their temperaments. The French Plato, it is well known, contradicts himſelf throughout his works; and on no ſubject ſo much as on the preſent. Helvetius has collected his contradictions; the ſureſt and the moſt modeſt mode of confuting a writer of the fineſt genius. He has alſo thrown out an obſervation, which diſcloſes

the ſource of the errors of Rouſſeau. He ſays, " The contradictions of this celebrated writer are not to be wondered at. His *obſervations* are almoſt always *juſt*; and his *principles* almoſt always *falſe* and *trite*. From hence his errors. Little ſcrupulous in examining opinions generally received, the number of thoſe he adopts, impoſe on him."

We ſee the opinion of Reynolds, on the genius for painting; we ſhall contraſt it with that of Rouſſeau; and we may then enquire, if, on this ſubject, the opinion of a philoſopher and a painter is not to be preferred to him who only was a philoſopher.

Rouſſeau, in his Emilius, book iii. p. 100, amuſes his readers with an anecdote. He tells us, he was acquainted with a ſervant, who having frequently obſerved his maſter paint and deſign, felt a furious paſſion to become a painter and deſigner. He

paſſed

paſſed three years, nailed to his chair, in painting and deſigning; and nothing but *attendance on his maſter*, could take him away from his pleaſing occupations. At length favoured by his maſter, and aſſiſted by the inſtructions of an artiſt, he quitted his livery, and lived by the produce of his pencil.—I ſhall now quote the very expreſſions our author employs, "Till a certain point, perſeverance ſuffices in lieu of genius; he has reached this point, and will never paſs it. The conſtancy and emulation of this honeſt man are laudable; but he will never paint but for ſign-poſts." I refer the reader to the original for other obſervations, while I ſhall make one myſelf on this anecdote.

It is with facts like theſe, that the ſyſtem I have adopted is ever combated; but I could never ſee in one of theſe facts, any thing which could ſuffer an inveſtigation. Here is a young

man, who has already attained a certain age, who is in the daily ſervice of his maſter, and who, without preparatory inſtructions, or various models, feels "the eager diſpoſition," and the neceſſary "aſſiduity." But both the diſpoſition and the aſſiduity are very imperfect. An artiſt who is inceſſantly performing domeſtic buſineſs, muſt be claſſed among thoſe, whoſe moral ſituation infallibly enfeebles, and almoſt annihilates, genius. This young man, had he known no other ſervice, but his art, and no other maſter, but a Reynolds, it is not improbable, with his diſpoſition and aſſiduity, might have become a great artiſt. All this only tends to prove, that the great difficulty of becoming a man of genius, conſiſts, among others, in his moral ſituation; and that no footman has any chance of becoming a great artiſt.

Reſpecting the idea of Rouſſeau, that our virtues or our vices are derived from

from our temperament; I muſt juſt obſerve, that if ſometimes they do, often many are acquired from moral cauſes. There appears nothing ſupernatural in the notion, that a ſon inherits the quality of the blood of his parents. I have obſerved, a perſon born of a choleric father, and a ſaturnine mother, unite theſe qualities, ſeemingly incompatible; ſometimes warm and generous as the father, and ſometimes frigid and cautious as the mother. Yet, even in this inſtance, we might ſhow that the effects of this character, can be derived from the manners and habits with which the ſon has long been familiariſed. Another ſon of the ſame family, having been abſent from home at an early period, and reſiding, for the greater part of his life, in France, was a being totally different from the generous father, the cautious mother, and the brother at once choleric and ſaturnine.

PAGE 300.

AFTER what is mentioned of Dyer, inſert this paragraph.

Warburton, in his anonymous "Critical and Philoſophical Enquiry into the Prodigies, &c. of Hiſtorians," in a concluding note, alluding to the eminent ſucceſs of the French, in tranſlations of the ancients, imagines that our little emulation, in this department of literature, may be attributed to the *coldneſs* of our *climate*. I tranſcribe his words. "The Frenchman, vigorous and enterpriſing, is ambitious of poſſeſſion; while we, with a falſe *modeſty* and *coldneſs*, natural from our *climate*, content ourſelves with a diſtant admiration."

From this it would appear, that *our climate* has of late become *much warmer*, and therefore *we*, *leſs modeſt*; ſince we have enriched our language with ſome verſions of the claſſics, which vie with the beauty of the originals. Mr. Melmoth

moth and Mr. Beloe have received the gratitude of the Engliſh reader. The ample and entertaining commentary which the latter has beſtowed on Aulus Gellius, gives a new value to this ſpecies of literature, and ſuggeſts this reflection on ſuch tranſlations. Writers ſo exquiſite as Pliny, require no other decorations than the eloquence which is inſpired by the felicities of their diction; but authors not remarkable for their diſcernment or their delicacy, yet abounding with information, like Aulus Gellius, exact from their tranſlators, the adventitious art of ſcattering an attractive amuſement in copious notes. It is thus that a tranſlation may be rendered more valuable than the original.

Since I am on the ſubject of claſſical tranſlations, I muſt obſerve, that a judicious ſelection from Athenæus remains a deſideratum; and the French have both an ancient and modern verſion

ſion of this curious compilement of Grecian opinions, and Grecian manners.

A tranſlation of Plutarch's Morals has long been rumoured. The Abbé Ricard in 1783—1792—gave a verſion, accompanying each eſſay with philoſophical ſummaries and uſeful notes. The preſent edition of Profeſſor Wittenbach, will enable the Engliſh tranſlator to excel his predeceſſors in correctneſs and lucidity. Of the French verſion, the learned Profeſſor ſays, that the tranſlator has ſo contrived with the corrupted paſſages, as to have rendered the verſion intelligible to the reader; the obſcure paſſages he has laboured with greater care; having diligently ſought out their meaning and occaſionally explained them, from his knowledge of the ſubjects in a plauſible way, adapted to the genius of thoſe to whom he addreſſed himſelf, which merit he freely allows him.

PAGE 335.

AFTER what is mentioned of Pere Hardouin, inſert this paragraph.

Warburton, whatever his learning, and however great his ability, owed his reputation to his bold paradoxes. What Dr. Leland has, among other ſcholars, pronounced of him, is now confirmed, not by the opinions of individuals, but by the voice of the public. He ſaid, that "the Biſhop's learned labours were diſtinguiſhed by a bold oppoſition to the general opinions of mankind," and again more forcibly "by an hardy oppoſition to the general ſenſe of mankind." Warburton, ſupported by his Warburtonians, long reigned a literary deſpot; but the artificial fires of party fade in the light of truth. It is even ſaid, that he outlived his reputation, and he is now much better known by his name, than by his works; the certain fate of thoſe ingenious

ingenious and bold writers, who build their edifices on the ſands of paradox.